

THE SOUTHERN COUSIN



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The Southern Cousin



BY

ANNIE WESTON WHITNEY



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American Baptist Publication Society
1420 CHESTNUT STREET

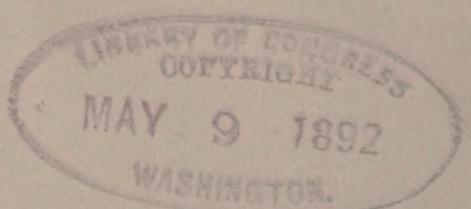
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ANNIE WESTON WHITNEY.

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"There is a relation between the hours of our life and the centuries of time."



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THE SOUTHERN COUSIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

ON the outskirts of a busy, thriving town in North Carolina, and at the foot of a somewhat pretentious hill, stood a tenantless old stone mill. On the afternoon on which my story opens, this hill was brilliant with autumn foliage, which would, at another time, have attracted the attention of a girl sitting on the door sill of the mill. Now she was looking expectantly down the road, a pleased smile occasionally lighting up her face, a face by no means beautiful, but with a something somewhere—it was difficult to determine at first just where—that convinced one that there was character back of it, and that the owner was a girl to be trusted. One could see, too, that it was a face ever changing and full of lights and shades, a face interesting to watch, and yet without one beautiful feature. There are faces that reflect the soul beyond them more strikingly than others. Helen Carter's was one of these.

As she sat now she had sat many times before; but in the last three or four years those times had seemed to

become only memories of the past, not as before, realities of the present. Just now it was a reality, however, and evidently a pleasant one; for a glad, happy look came into her face as a man's form approached.

"Why, Nell dear, you here? This seems like old times," he said cheerily, as she suddenly came within the range of his vision.

"That's just what I wanted," was the reply, as a bright face looked up into his. "I ran off this afternoon on purpose to have one of the old talks with you, John dear. I felt that I could not go away without it, though it will have to be a very little one this time. Let us take our old seat inside, and try to forget that it has been so long since we were here together."

They entered the mill and seated themselves on an old bench in front of an opening, which had once served the purpose of a window, and through which they could see the stream of water that had formerly kept the machinery of the mill in motion.

"Oh, John," said his companion, laughing, "do you remember the funny sketch of the mill I made one day when I was sitting on that big rock over there? I don't know what ever became of it."

"Don't you?" laughed her companion. "I think I do."

"You don't mean that you have it?" asked Helen, in some surprise.

"Yes, dear, and I would not part with it for a good deal, either."

"You foolish, foolish John," she said, giving one of his arms a little squeeze. "You know it wasn't worth keeping."

"There is evidently a difference of opinion on that point, my dear, but it brings me to a subject I have wanted to mention. I have made arrangements for you to take lessons in drawing while you are away, Nell. I —"

Helen sprang up and put a hand over his mouth before he could say more, saying herself :

"Stop, stop; not another word, John dear."

"But I have not finished, little sister," he said, gently removing her hand.

"Then don't finish, please. You have no right to tempt me. Oh, John, dear John," she said, in a distressed tone, "you know that you ought not to spend money on me in that way, and that I have no right to allow it, with everything else you have to do. It would be wrong in me to take it. Mother and the children need everything —"

"Conscientious little woman," he said, tenderly putting his arm about her and drawing her toward him. "I have no intention of taking anything from the mother and children for this. The money does not come from the farm, dear; so you need not worry on that score."

"Then where is it to come from, John dear?"

"In the first place, it will not take a fortune, as you seem to think. New York offers fine advantages of that kind for a comparatively small sum."

"But, John dear, if it cost only one dollar, it would be too much. You are going to make some great sacrifice to give me a pleasure. I know you are."

"No, no, little woman, there is no sacrifice anywhere, only a great pleasure in the thought that I am able to do this for you. I want you to feel that it is, Nell, and that it makes me as happy as I hope it will you."

"But, John ——" she began, and then looking up, quickly changed her tone, and asked, anxiously, "Is that why you have been working so hard at night, lately?"

"Suppose it is, dear? Have I not been doing work I love? I had an opportunity of doing some draughting, and you know how glad I am to have the practice."

"Yes, John, and I know too, that if father had lived, you would be doing that now instead of what you are. That is all the stronger reason for my not touching the money. You must use it on your own dear self; for I will not have it."

"Then I must tell you what has been on my mind for some time, little sister. It may hurt you at first, but hear me out, and then I think we will understand and look at this matter in the same light." He drew her closer as he spoke, and lifted her face so that he could look into it. "You know, Nell, that so long as I live, there will be a home for you, if my health is spared; but should I be taken away"—he felt her shiver, and saw her bite her lip, and try to keep back the tears—"there would not be enough to support all. Since father died, it has been a great source of trouble to me; but when

this invitation came from uncle, I seemed suddenly to see light. With the natural talent you have for sketching, there is no reason why, with a little teaching, you should not be able to make it of use some time, if necessary. You know, dear, I believe that all our talents are given us for a purpose, and should be carefully improved."

"How about your own, John?" she said, soberly. "It does not seem right for me to take money for mine, when you ——"

"The Lord has his own reasons for not letting me use mine. He may open the way for it just as unexpectedly as he has for you."

Helen Carter was a girl who reasoned some things out in her own mind very quickly; and in this instance, the thought came to her that, by cultivating her talent now, she might even be able to help John, by doing something for herself. Releasing herself from his embrace, she stood before him, but with half-averted face, as she said:

"I will take the money, John. I am glad you told me this."

It was very evident there were tears somewhere near; and John Carter drew her again to his side, but without requiring her to look up, said:

"There is something back in that little heart and brain, of which I have not yet been told. What is it?"

A weary little sob, followed by a fit of crying, was his only answer for a time. Then Helen looked up through her tears, and said, penitently:

“I am so sorry.”

“I am not,” said her brother, tenderly. “I would rather you would cry here than anywhere else. Now for it.” And he smiled as he added, “You know there is no getting out of it now.”

“It was only a homesick feeling. I have had it before; for I know I cannot be perfectly happy anywhere away from you. It seems so selfish in me even to want to go; and you will miss me?”

“Miss my little sunbeam?” he said, kissing her very lovingly. “Who could help that who has ever known her? But I will be happy in the thought that she is shining for some one else, and warming up other hearts as she has warmed mine. That, of itself, will be a pleasure to me; and then there is so much to which to look forward in the homecoming. In the meantime, there will be the letters, like dainty little fairies, always bringing precious messages. Just think of that!”

She half smiled, and then shook her head, as she said:

“I have wished, more than once, that uncle had not thought about sending for me.”

“Why, dear?”

“Because I am afraid of myself, John.”

“What do you mean, Nell?”

“I hardly know exactly, except—— You remember, John, the day our own mother died, and you took me in your arms and talked to me so beautifully. Somehow it has seemed ever since as though you were the good part

of me, and without you I would be bad and wicked. I know that the only time you have been away from me, the time you went to see about that position, I was awful. I am ashamed of it every time I think of it now; but I was horrid and cross to mother and the children, and I am afraid you would have been grieved, had you known. I never could have acted so if you had been at home; and don't you see how it might be when I go away from you? When you are here, I would not do anything for the world that would grieve you. Indeed, John, the thought of you has kept me from doing more than one thing for which I should have been sorry."

He loosened his hold of her, and moving a little to one side, and looking very earnestly in her face, said, soberly:

"Do you care more for my love than for God's?"

She did not raise her eyes, and he continued: "If that is so, I can understand one reason why he has put this opportunity in your way for leaving me for a while; but, Nell dear, I think you have only exaggerated all this in your mind. I have no fears, dear, but that you will be the same sweet, lovely girl everywhere, always willing to think and act for others. It strikes me I have more faith in my little sister than she has in herself."

"I wish I were half as good as you, John," she said, nestling close to him again. "I don't suppose there will be any excuse for not being good in New York. You see it is so different from home; for they have lots of money, and plenty of servants, and uncle said I would have nothing to do but have a good time."

"We never know, dear, what is before us. The Lord often gives us very unexpected work; and not always of the kind we would prefer. You must remember, too, that there is always work to be done for him, everywhere; but I am sure my little sister will not shrink from what may be given her to do in the future, any more than she has done in the past. And she will do it for him who has done so much for her, and not simply to please her brother."

"Thank you, John," she said, looking up through her tears. "It does me good to have you say that; but you always do me good. I wish we could stay longer, but it is getting dark, and I must hurry home; for I am going to make you the very best tea-cake you ever ate for your supper to-night."

"Can't go home till the sun comes out, even if we have to do without the tea-cake. I'm not going to take any clouds home with me. How did you manage to leave, this afternoon, busy little housekeeper?"

"Played truant! And I enjoyed it, too," she said, laughing. "You see, I made up my mind early this morning that I would, if possible, come to meet you; for I knew where you were going, so I just made things fly. And I finished everything there was to do to-day, except a basketful of darning. Mother was lying down, and the children were where they could not trouble her; so I just shut my eyes to the stockings, and ran away, knowing I could do most of them to-night."

"And burn the midnight oil? I object to that, dear;

for I want you to take away some real Southern roses on your cheeks. Never mind about the stockings. Annie Lyon is going to do all the darning and mending while you are away."

"Why, John dear, you ought not to do that."

"It is her own proposition; and she thinks I am doing her a great favor by allowing it. When her brother was sick, you remember, and could only work part of a day at a time, I let one of my men take his place every day when he had to leave, so that he could keep his place and get full pay. Annie has never forgotten it; and since she heard you were going away has begged so hard to be allowed to do some of the work you have been in the habit of doing, that I have given my consent, so far as to tell her to come one afternoon in each week. She told me this morning she was coming over for all day to-morrow to help you; for she knew there would be many little things to do, and she thought you might want to go out a little before you leave."

"That is very thoughtful and kind in Annie," said Helen.

"So you see, you need not worry about the stockings, nor burn the midnight oil over them. Are you nearly ready to go, dear?"

"Yes, John; and I have something pretty to show you then. My new suit came home to-day. It is lovely, and is just your taste. I am sure you will like it."

"How do you know anything about my taste, young lady?" he asked, laughing.

“Never mind how I know. Just see if I have not studied it. You can’t imagine how rich I feel with two new dresses at once; especially when I did not intend to have even one this winter. I think I would like to show the suit to Aunt Han, if she would not think me vain.”

“We’ll go then together, to-morrow afternoon; and you shall wear it. She may not say much; but I am sure, in her heart, she will be glad to see you prettily dressed. Is there any other place you would like to go to before you start on your travels?”

“Yes, I would like one day to go out to see Mammy Tot.”

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECT.

IT was a dainty little figure with a very bright face that stood in the doorway, the next afternoon, as John Carter came through the gate. For an instant, he thought, with a pang, of what home would be without the constant presence of the sister who had brightened it ever since she had entered it; but he resolutely put aside all selfish feelings, and as he took off his hat and bowed very low, he thought there never could have been a sweeter, lovelier creature than she upon whom he then looked.

It was one of the few typical Southern homes allowed to remain as a landmark in that part of the country; for the fortunes of war had necessitated much changing about in the ownership of property. Some old homes had been entirely destroyed, others had been bodily removed from the land on which they had been built, while others still had received additions, or had been otherwise so changed that they were not recognizable as the same buildings they had been when held by their former owners. Mr. Carter, Helen's father, had been able to keep the place which had been the home of his father and grandfather before him in such a condition that they would still have recognized it, though they might

have thought its position had been changed ; for a busy town was fast creeping up to it, ready to make it a part of itself. It was still outside, however ; and the grand old oaks on the lawn, some of them bearing great masses of mistletoe, seemed like sentinels guarding the approach to the house. Helen had often sat on the balcony just outside of her room, and wondered over the tales the old trees might tell of those who had lived before her, under the shadow of their branches. Who, besides herself, had sat on that same balcony, and sought and found rest and comfort from the silent teachings of those monarchs of the forest ? Or what gay, happy parties had sat on the long, wide veranda in front, whose roof was supported by giant pillars that still stood as monuments of past greatness ; for the Carters had been wealthy, and had entertained most royally. Many a story of this had Helen heard from Mammy Tot, who had formerly been a slave in the family, and who had lived with them, from time to time since, nursing Helen herself when a baby.

“ Dem’s de times wot’s worth talkin’ ‘bout, honey,” she would say. “ De house niggers was kep’ a flyin’ den, when de news come dat de famley gwine hab mo’ company dan common. Dey’s allus habbin’ mo’ less. I minds de time when my boy, Shingles, he’s bigger dan me now, but he’s a mite uv a picaninny den, put on de fust white apron fur ter holp tote de dishes an’ sich ter de ladies an’ gemmans. Shingles, he’s thet pleased at de notion, dat he done clean furgot ‘bout dat apun, an’ he

went down ter de cuppin ter 'nounce what he gwine do ter de chillens wot's down dar holpin' ter tote de milk ter de house. Lor, honey, dat chile jes' flung he sef ober de fence so suddent like, dat he done lit smack on de horns ob ole Sooky, an' fore he knowed whar he am, he back on de yudder side agin quicker'n he come, an' down en de ditch. Sakes alive! honey, yer nebber did seen sich a apun. Ole missus, she all done up en silks and satins when she seen 'im, but she larf an' tell me ter fix 'im up an' git a clean apun. Den she done tole dat Shingles dat de nex' time he's a mind ter go ter de cuppin, she reckin' ez how he better go wif he feet an' not hed fust. Lor, honey, dat picaninny ain't no hed ter do nuthin' dat night, nohow. Fust time he's sont inter de room wif some dishes an' sich an' seen all dem ladies an' gemmans en dey fine cloes, he jes' stood stock still an' look till all de dishes done rattle down ter de flo' an' he cut an' run."

This was one of the many stories Helen loved to hear when she was quite young; but as she grew older she asked more about "dem ladies an' gemmans en dey fine cloes;" and Mammy Tot would entertain her by the hour with stories of what had happened in her time. There were incidents of the war to tell, too, but with that, all accounts of merry making ceased; for the stern realities of life crowded too closely upon each other then. At its close, Helen's father was owner of the old home, which he was fortunate enough to be able to keep, by selling off other property elsewhere. It was necessary, however, to practice strict economy for some time, but he

had a wife who cheerfully aided him, and did all in her power to make his home happy, and to prevent his missing many comforts and luxuries to which he had been accustomed. When Helen was old enough to understand such things, however, her father was again prosperous, or much more so than he had been since the war, and her early childhood was a very happy one; for father, mother, and brother made a great pet of her. But trouble came into her young life suddenly and unexpectedly; and when, with his strong arms about her, John had told her that their dear mother had gone where she would never suffer more, she had felt as though the world and all it contained had become enveloped in a cloud that would never leave it. It was a sad, homesick little girl who went about the house for a long time after that; but gradually, as she saw how her father and John, particularly the latter, who treated her so lovingly and tenderly, would brighten up when she seemed happier than usual, she realized that she could do so much toward making home pleasant for them. At first, it was a great effort; but soon it became a pleasure, as she found that in making others happy she was making herself so too. Her father, who was rather a quiet man, did not say much; but John not only showed by actions that he saw and appreciated what she did, but spoke and encouraged her. In that way they were drawn very close together; and when, in course of time, their father brought home another wife, no one ever heard a word of objection from either of them. They had talked the

matter over together, and they agreed to treat her as kindly as possible, and never let her feel that she was not welcome.

"Father is showing no disrespect to our own mother," John had said. "He has been very, very lonely since she died, and we ought to be glad of his happiness now."

"But, John," said Helen, "I can never call her mother. I know I can never do that."

"Yes, you can, dear, if father wishes it. It cannot possibly hurt our own dear mother, who, if she knew, would, I am sure, like us to do as father wishes."

The new mother proved to be much younger than their own had been, and brought with her one little girl; for she too, had been married before. She returned their greetings very pleasantly and hoped they would like her, as she meant to like them. Very bravely Helen accepted the change; but there were times when the thought of her own dear mother would make her very sad. It was then that John helped her, and they had their long talks in the old mill. Before others she was always bright and cheerful, and ever ready to lend a helping hand. For three years they were a very happy family, and then trouble came again; but this time it was money troubles. Mr. Carter had lost so heavily that he was obliged to sell a large part of his home property in order to be able to live on the remaining portion of it; and even then it was necessary to practice the strictest economies of every kind.

Helen was to have been sent to boarding school, and

John was to have gone where he could cultivate the talent of which he longed to make use. All this was necessarily given up; and John stayed on the farm and assisted his father there, so that between them they could keep a home for the family.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Carter had been brought up in such absolute luxury that she did not know how to economize herself, and the struggle was more than she felt equal to; so that she did not object to anything Helen was willing to do to take the burden from her. Not understanding such things, she did not realize the weight of the burden she was allowing younger shoulders to bear; and Helen, anxious to add nothing to her father's cares, did not let him see how much had fallen to her share. John knew more than any one and tried to help her in little ways; but the time came when there were two more little ones to be fed, clothed and cared for, with a mother who required constant attention; and he would have rebelled and gone to his father, had not Helen stopped him.

"No, no," she said. "Indeed, John, it is better not. Mother does not know how, or she would do things, and I am glad to do them."

John worried a good deal about it, but thought he saw a prospect of better things coming for them all; and they were coming, and John was arranging once more to go away, when his father died. Then things had gone from bad to worse for a time—the failure of a large concern in which Mr. Carter had put money leaving his

family with little besides the income they could get from the farm. Before his father died, John had promised to look after and care for "mother and the children"; so he had worked hard to keep them all together on the farm, hoping that in a few years it might increase in value sufficiently to warrant his offering it for sale, in the hope of getting a good price for it.

Since his father's death, John had ever found "the little sister," as he called her, the sunshine of his life. He had never thought of her leaving him until a few weeks before, when their uncle in New York had written that a friend, on his way from a trip South, would stop in the town, and he thought it a good opportunity for Helen to come North and spend the winter. She would doubtless enjoy seeing a little more of the world than she had seen, and never having been in a large city, would find enough to interest her for several months. He offered to pay her traveling expenses, and see that she returned to her home under proper escort. John decided at once that she must go. He had known for some time that her duties were growing heavier, and had tried to devise some plan for making a complete change. Here was his opportunity, and a chance for giving Helen an unexpected pleasure. She, at first, had said that she could not go; but John had talked to her plainly, and had even persuaded her that it would be better for their mother if she were left to look after things herself a little more. Mrs. Carter herself urged Helen to go, remembering a week she had spent there when life seemed

happier to her than it did now. She brightened up a good deal then, and told Helen of many of the things she had seen there.

After it was fully decided that she was to go, Helen gave herself up to the delights of anticipation, though there were times when she looked very seriously into the matter. It was the pleasant, happy side she saw as John approached.

“Well,” she said, smiling, “what do you think of it?”

“I think there will be nothing half so sweet and lovely in all New York,” he said, smiling back.

“Oh, you stupid John,” she said. “That just shows that you have never been there. Where will this desperate attempt at a pug be?” And she raised a gloved finger to her nose.

“I adore pugs,” was the reply.

“Nonsense, John. Be sensible, and tell me if my taste does not accord with yours. Do you like my suit?”

“I cannot say how I would like it without the pug accompaniment,” was the reply. “With it, it is a very charming whole.”

“Do you mean to spoil me, that you flatter me so, John, or are you only making fun of me? Come, put on your best coat and let us go.”

CHAPTER III.

AUNT HAN.

MISS HANNAH ARMSTRONG was Helen's great-aunt; and she lived on the other side of the village, in a small house she had bought at the close of the war. Here she had lived alone ever since, save for the presence of old Cassy, a former slave, who had clung to her, and still acted the part of servant. "Miss Hannah" was pronounced by the neighbors "sharp and crusty," and "a little queer." It is true, she seldom said or did pleasant things; but then there were those, and among them her great-niece and nephew, who insisted that beneath the crust there were a warm heart and many kind feelings. Even they, however, had to take much of it on faith; and there had been a time when Helen had refused to enter the house. It was at the time when her father brought home his second wife. Miss Hannah had taken the matter in hand, and had not only talked to Mr. Carter, but of him, until Helen declared she would not go near her until she stopped. Whether the old lady missed the visits of the child, or whether she was ashamed of the way in which she had acted, I do not know; but certain it is, that Helen renewed her visits, and the subject was never referred to, though Miss Hannah still showed her feeling on the subject by never

entering the house of which the new Mrs. Carter was the head.

She was sitting in her accustomed seat by the old mahogany table, knitting, when Helen opened the door, and showed herself. Miss Hannah looked up, first over her spectacles, and then through them, without speaking.

"I thought you might like to see my pretty new dress, Aunt Han," said Helen, standing before her.

"Fine clothes and furbelows!" said the old lady, shaking her head. "Where will it end? You'll be wanting silks and satins and velvets next; and you'll be too fine to bring them here, where the styles have not changed for years. I am wearing the same bonnet I wore when your mother died, and I expect to wear it as long as I live. It's like the one I had at the time of the Surrender, and I find it as good a style as any. But, dear me, you young people have so many contraptions, that it takes one round like a whirlwind to catch up to them."

Helen allowed her aunt to have her say, and then asked:

"But you like my new things, don't you, Aunt Han?"

"I don't like anything that puts foolish notions in girls' heads. There are enough there already; and what with those they have naturally, and those that are put there by others, they have got way beyond me. There, child, if you'll take off that thing on top of your head, and a few of those outside arrangements, I'll get you an old apron, and you can help me get tea."

"Ought we to stay, John?" asked Helen, who, though

accustomed to her aunt's peculiar way of putting things, felt that she was even a little harder than usual this afternoon.

"Your clothes are too fine, are they, to rub against my old ones? What will it be when you get back, I wonder? Suppose you won't come at all. There, go to my room at once; and put those new-fangled contraptions out of my sight. Then you can go and talk to Cassy till I call you. I have some business to talk over with your brother."

A reassuring look from John kept the tears from coming. As she went to her aunt's room, she said to herself:

"She does not mean it. It's only her way." And the trouble in her face was all gone when she reached the kitchen, and appeared before old Cassy.

"De Lawd bress yer, honey," she said, quickly. "Yer's a sight such as dese yere ole eyes doan light on, ebery day. Wot yer 'spose me an' ole missus gwine do, when yer's gone? I's been a-studyin' 'bout dat ting consid'ble lately; an' I reck'n ole missus ben adoin' de same ting. She doan say nothin'; but I knows dey's someat atroublin' on 'er, an' I 'spicious dat am it."

"Do you really think she will miss me much?" asked Helen.

"Ain't no tinkin' bout dat, I jis knows 'bout it. Lor sakes, chile, ain't I ben 'structed particler 'bout wot we's ter hab ef dey's comp'ny fur tea, dis yere week; an' doan I know dat ebery ting she ax fur special am de tings

wot she jes' knows yer likes ; an' ain't she come her own sef, yistiday, an' make de little cakes, same's she uster make when ye's a mite uv a wee thing."

"Has she really done all that for me ?" asked Helen.

"In course she is, miss ; an' pears like's ef ter me, she ain't ben able ter sittle down ter nothin' sence Chewsday, when she knowed fur sartin 'bout yer gwine 'way."

"I'm glad you told me that, Cassy," said Helen, pleasantly ; then she changed the subject at once, and inquired about the old woman's rheumatism, and kept her talking of herself while she was busy cooking some of the good things that had been ordered, in case there was company to tea.

"Aunt Han," as she was often called by others besides her own family, had her own peculiar way of showing approbation or displeasure ; and John Carter understood her perhaps better than any one else, except old Cassy, who for years had listened to her "sharp tongue" without rebelling. John knew of more than one kind act that she had done, while at the same time allowing her tongue to say some very hard and bitter things. Indeed, he had learned to know that the harder the things she said, the softer were her feelings ; so he felt sure, during her remarks to Helen, that her feelings did not accord with her words, but he deemed it best to let her say what she wished, thinking that then, perhaps, she would soften materially. When they were alone, Aunt Han began, sharply :

"Why did not that child want to stay ?"

"She was afraid she might be wanted at home, I think," was the reply. "And, besides, she left Annie Lyon at work for her; and I think she wanted to see and thank her for what she has done."

"Hm! That woman has got to learn to get along without her, and thanks won't spoil by keeping. I suppose that child thinks she's a very fine bird, now, with her fine feathers; but I want to know, John Carter, where the money has come from."

"That's my affair, Aunt Han, if you please," said John.

"Why did you not tell me to mind my own business, in plain words, John Carter? Well, now you've made a fine bird of her, I suppose you are ready to let her go for good."

"I don't understand."

"Hm! You forget that when birds have once tried their wings, they are not so willing to come back to the parent nest."

"I have no fears for this one, on that score," said John, decidedly.

"They are sometimes trapped, and put in gilded cages."

"I do not think we need fear for that, either," he said, pleasantly.

"Hm! There's no knowing what might happen before that child comes back to you, John Carter," she said, diving down into her knitting bag, and bringing up an old-fashioned knitted purse. Opening it, she took from

it a newer, fresher one, and handing it to her companion, said :

“That’s to go in a corner of her trunk where she’ll never see it till she gets to New York ; and she’s never to know where it came from.”

John took the purse, but he could not conceal his surprise as he felt a thick roll of money in it, and he said, reproachfully :

“You ought not to do this, Aunt Han.”

“And what right have you to dictate to me, Mr. John Carter ?” she said, looking at him sternly from over the top of her spectacles ; but, without noticing, he continued in the same tone :

“I am afraid this is why you sold old Sooky.”

“I sold old Sooky because she *was* old. I’d like to know who had a better right to sell her than I, who have raised her from a calf ?”

“For that very reason——”

“See here, John Carter, this is my ‘mind your own business’ affair,” said Aunt Han, wrathfully ; and motioning with her hand and frowning ominously, she added : “Put that thing out of my sight, I tell you. I never want to see it again.”

“Give me permission first to tell Nell where it comes from,” said John.

“Never,” was the decided reply. “I have no intention of letting her think she can come to me for more when that is gone. I tell you——”

“If I thought you would ever dream of our Nell’s

doing a thing of that kind, she should never touch one cent of this ; but I think better of you than that. You have made some great sacrifice to give her this money, and you do not wish her to know it."

"I never make sacrifices," was the gruff reply, as she rose, and, going to the door, called Cassy.

"Such a lovely tea as we are going to have!" said Helen to her brother when she came into the room.

"I should think you did not get anything to eat at home," said her aunt, sharply.

"Indeed we do," was the reply, "but not so many good things all at once." And seating herself on a low, old-fashioned hassock, she asked if she might not wind some yarn, as she used to do when she was a little thing.

"Ladies of fashion don't wind yarn nowadays," was the reply.

"But I'm not a lady of fashion, auntie, and never will be. You could not make me one if you tried."

"There have been plenty of them among your ancestors, child."

"That was all right," said Helen. "They could afford it, but I never can."

"All the same, you'd like to be a fine lady and wear fine clothes every day."

"Not unless John could wear them too."

"Well, well, we'll see about that." And in a somewhat softer mood she talked of other things until supper was announced ; and then Helen, in the exuberance of her own spirits, being sure that the many good things pro-

vided that night had been forethoughts that they should take away the sting of her reception, would not allow anything her aunt said to throw a damper over her feelings.

“John dear,” she said on her way home, “I felt so badly at first, until I thought that auntie did not mean her crossness.”

“No, dear, she does not,” was the reply; “she feels your leaving us very, very deeply, I am sure, and the sight of you in your pretty things brought it so forcibly before her that she gave vent to her feelings in her own peculiar way. She loves the little sister very dearly.”

“I think she does, John, and I wish her life was a happier one.”

“It is the life that best suits her, dear.”

“I suppose so, John. I know we all have our own places in the world; but it seems, somehow, as though I were about to give mine up.”

“We can’t any of us quite do that, dear; but it depends on ourselves whether the places assigned to us are worthily filled.

“‘Thou camest not to thy place by accident;
It is the very place God meant for thee.’”

“Yes, John; but it seems like beginning over again.”

“You will find that each day will bring its own work, and will become a yesterday with its records of that work. You remember, dear, how Longfellow puts it:

“ ‘ For the structure that we raise,
Time is with materials filled.
Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build.’ ”

“ Won’t you give me an illuminated text to take away with me, John? You have given me some that have helped me so much here. Give me something new that will help me while away.”

“ With pleasure, Nell; and you can take this now in your thoughts:

“ ‘ With God even across the ocean,
Without him, not even to the threshold.’ ”

CHAPTER IV.

A VISIT TO MAMMY TOT.

“DE good Lawd hab mercy! Ef dat ain’t Miss Hel’n, den dese yer ole eyes o’ mine ain’t worth habin.” And Mammy Tot stood in the doorway of her cabin, and shaded her eyes with her hands as she looked off toward the public road.

“Whar yer done seed ‘er?” asked a boy who sprang from the floor and now stood in the doorway by his grandmother’s side.

“Ober dar ‘ginst dem pine bushes. Run along, ye lop-sided picaninny, an’ stan’ by dem bars ter Loyer Jones’ cotton patch so’s she kin walk fro ‘thout hevin’ ter clim up and down on th’ other side.”

“I ain’t seed ‘er yit,” said the boy, moving his head from side to side, and wrinkling his brows as though straining his eyes to see.

“Wot ails ye, chile?” said his grandmother, giving him a vigorous shake. “Ain’t I done tole ye dat she’s dar, an’ is ye done furgot all de manners I done treat ye to? Is ye gwine stan’ dar an’ let dat young missus wot I lub better’n——.” But the boy heard no more; for, with a series of somersaults, he had started off to let down the bars. If his manner of locomotion was peculiar, his appearance was more so, for he looked as though he had



been outgrowing the clothes he wore for a year, at least, and his long limbs, as they flew around in the air, seemed to glory in their freedom. Three somersaults and a run, repeated several times, brought him to the bars just in time to lower them for Helen.

"Howdy, Sambo," she said, pleasantly, "and thank you for coming to meet me."

"Howdy, miss," was the reply, as Sambo took from his head a cap that fitted so tightly that his antics had failed to loosen it. He grabbed it from the top, and stood twisting it in his hands as Helen stepped through the bars, and then replacing it and putting it down tightly, he proceeded to replace the bars.

"All well, Sambo?" asked Helen.

"Tol'ble, miss, cep' de critter."

"There's nothing the matter with Cæsar, is there?" she asked, in a voice of some concern.

"Ben havin' a spell o' somethin' nother."

"I hope he's all right now."

"Reckon."

An important member of many colored families in the South is the "critter," sometimes a horse or mule, but most frequently, as in this case, a steer. Many a time had Helen met Sambo walking by the side of Cæsar, whose harness consisted of ropes and chains and gayly colored pieces of cloth. The wagon he drew was a two-wheeled one, and looked as though made of trees that had been cut down, stripped of their branches, and put together "just so." Sometimes it held a bale of cot-

ton, on its way to town, and sometimes a load of wood, the load consisting of about a dozen small logs, on the top of which was tied a bundle of fodder for "the critter." Helen knew the sickness or loss of "the critter" meant a loss of revenue to the family, and was somewhat distressed by what she had heard; but she could get nothing further out of Sambo, so contented herself with waiting till she could inquire of an older member of the family.

"De Lawd bless yer, honey," said Mammy Tot, as Helen greeted her. "I jes' knowed they's some one a-comin', kase my nose done ben yitchin' all dis yere bressed day, but I ain't neber dreamin' none dat it ud be you. You Mandy, you fetch out a cheer fur Miss Hel'n, an' be spry 'bout it, too," she said, turning to a half-grown girl, who stood gaping at Helen as though she was some rare curiosity.

"I was afraid you would be in the cotton field," said Helen, when she had spoken to the children and taken the seat brought by Mandy.

"Dey ain't pickin' none ter-day, fur de cotton gittin' scace dis time o' year, an' de ole man he in de woods pickin' up bresh an' stuff fur fire-wood, come winter."

The cabin, outside of which Helen was sitting, was constructed of logs, and consisted of but one room; but in that everything was as neat and clean as in "my lady's parlor." For Mammy Tot had profited by the lessons given her by "ole missus," and took pride in having others see she "done ben brung up by de qual'ty."

"Yer see," she would say when questioned, "dey's a

heap o' po' backers* wot an't nebber had no larnin' dat kin', 'case dey's allers riz fiel' hans; but I's one o' dem kin' wot's allers a house sarvint, an' I's allers pertickler now 'bout habin' eberyting same 's ef my ole missus gwine come in de do' nex' minute en' see it."

Certainly everything was clean and neat outside as well as in; even the stones that were piled up on the outside and formed a chimney looked as though they might have been polished off quite recently.

There were many matters of family interest to be talked over between Helen and Mammy Tot, and among them came an account of the troubles with the critter; but, as they were all over, they were soon left for others, and then came a discussion of the proposed trip North.

"How fur ye reckin it am, Miss Helen?" asked Mammy Tot.

"It's a long, long way," was the reply. "I shall have to travel all night and most of the next day to get there."

"Laws-a-massy, miss! Takes a heap o' money ter git dar."

"Yes, mammy, but Uncle John has been kind enough to say he would pay that."

"De Lawd bress 'im, chile! He am a gemman sho'; but I warn't a-studyin' 'bout dat. I's a-studyin' 'bout de time Miss Lettie, she went Norf, an' she's tuk sick an' dey's a great ter do 'bout sendin' uv a nuss ter wait on 'er an' tend ter 'er. Yer see ef dey's anyting dat ole

* Poor blacks.

Mammy Tot kin do fur de chile wot she tended an' riz on her knee, dey ain't no sort o' use tryin' ter hender uv it."

"Do you mean that you would really leave Uncle Joe and the children and go North, if I needed you?" asked Helen, as the color mounted to her cheeks and her eyes gazed eagerly into those of the old woman.

"Sho' nuff, chile; does yer 'spose I gwine d'sert my people dat er way, when my ole missus she holp ter tend me wid 'er own hans when I's down wid de fever? Law, Miss Helen, dey's one time dat dey's ten, twelve ov us down ter onct wid de fever, an' dat dar good 'ooman she ain't hed 'er cloths offen 'er back days an nights. She jes' tended ter all we same 's ef we's ez white ez snow. Reck'n we'd a died ef she hadn't, but she say dat she sponsible ter de Lawd fur de way we tooken keer on. Dat one good 'ooman, Miss Hel'n, an' ye tink dis ole nigger gwine furgit de good tings she done teach, an' let one ob de family suffer fur wot she kin do?"

"But you know Uncle Joe might have something to say about your leaving him and the children. You have them to take care of now," said Helen, touched by the old woman's words.

"Ye tink dat Joe gwine stop me frum holpin' one o' my ole missus famley, time come dat dey needs it? Den he ain't wurthy ter be de man wot I tuk fur good an' all. Naw, miss; Joe, he de fus' one ter say go, fur he feared,udderways, ter meet ole missus when he wants ter get trou de golden gates. Yer see, Miss Hel'n, I's riz befo' dey begun ter tink 'bout larnin' all we ter read

an' write, 'kas ole missus, she done that. I kin study now an' tell Joe an' de chillens 'bout de tings she larned all we en de good book. Dey's a heap on it wot I disremembers, but times in church de preacher hits on someat dat jes' de berry ting. Day's one ting dat I ain't nebber gin' up nohow, dat fits in now. I disremember zactly de words but de meanin' am dat ef dey's trouble er sickness anywhar I knows on dat I kin holp ter better, den I's bound ter go. Same's ef I's adyin' mysef an' aprayin' fur de Lawd ter holp me."

"I know what you mean," said Helen, intending to give her a verse to illustrate the thought, but stopped by hearing, just back of the cabin, a deep, bass voice singing these words:

"Way down by de rising sun, sun, sun,
When my Lawd calls me home,
Yer walk de golden streets, streets, streets,
Ob de New Jeru-sa-lum."

"Ef dat ain't de ole man done come back," said Mammy Tot. Then, raising her voice, she called, "Joe, yere's Missy Hel'n done come out yere ter see all we."

A moment later the old man appeared, and with a broad grin on his face, ahd his hat in his hand, said:

"Ef I ain't tickled ter see ye, miss, an' I 'specs de ole 'ooman, she clean gone wid de proud feelins. I ben a-tellin' on 'er dat she mus' go see ye befo' yer's done gone away; but law sakes, I ain't neber s'pcioned, now, dat ye's acomin' out yere, all dis ere way."

"But I have come, you see, and Mammy Tot will come and see me too, before I go, I hope?"

"Dat she will. She'll be dar, sho's yer bawn, miss."

When it was time for her to return, Sambo again accompanied her to the bars. Looking back from there, she could see the family still standing where she had left them; old Joe with his hat in his hand staring after her, with Mandy by his side, looking as though she expected their visitor to return. Mammy Tot was shading her face with her hands, while the two grandchildren by her side held tightly in their arms dolls that were relics of her own childhood, and were brought forth always on the occasions of her visits. She waved her hand back to them and then, turning, proceeded on her way, looking for the brother who was coming to meet her.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEPARTURE.

THE day had at last arrived when Helen was to start on her trip North. Her trunk had been locked and strapped at breakfast time by John, who told her she must turn her back while he put his text in a corner, for she was not to look at it until she reached her destination. Always neat in her appearance, for there was never anything careless or disorderly about her dress, she looked unusually well to-day as she went about her household duties as usual, with perhaps this difference, that there were tender thoughts for others that showed themselves in little deeds that would only be appreciated after she was gone. Mammy Tot had arrived early in the morning, intending to stay all day, "an' do fur Miss Hel'n." She it was who answered the summons to the door when a stranger presented himself and asked: "Does Miss Helen Carter live here?"

"Ya-as, sir, dat she do," was the reply. "Walk in, sir. Dis yere way, sir." And she led him into a room opening out of what was evidently the parlor. A very old piano and music stand, with heavily carved legs and brass ornamentations, led him to suppose that it had at one time been a music room, whatever its present use might be. It was a chilly day in early fall, and the bright

wood fire in the open fireplace proved very attractive to Mr. Duncan, who was standing before it when Helen entered.

As I have said before, there was something very attractive about Helen's face, though it was by no means beautiful. The one feature that proved a sore and sensitive point with her was the nose, which just escaped being a pug. She had a funny way of expressing sympathy for it that amused John, to whom her face was always lovely. It was the soul shining through the eyes, he said, that gave it a beauty nothing else could have done.

It was evidently something of this which Mr. Duncan saw when Helen first stood before him, for in speaking of the meeting afterward, he said :

“Without being strictly beautiful, it was one of the loveliest faces I ever saw. There were truth and honesty in it; and though I saw by the rising color, that she was somewhat excited at meeting me, she was perfectly at her ease, and very cordial in her welcome. I could not help wishing some of our society belles could take pattern from her; and yet she wore a calico dress and white apron. Nor was it the kind we read of in novels, showing no sign of anything but folded hands. No, she had been at work, I could see; but that, somehow, only added to her attractiveness.”

To Helen this meeting was a very great surprise; for she had understood that she was not to meet Mr. Duncan until she went to the train that afternoon; and when he

explained that he found he could reach the town some hours sooner, and thought she might like to see her escort and decide if she could like him well enough to trust herself with him, she said, simply:

“I never thought, for an instant, that uncle would let me go with any one I would not like.”

“But tastes differ, you know,” he said; “and I confess I was a little curious about my charge.”

She blushed slightly as she said:

“John will be very glad to see you.”

“Who is John?”

“My brother.”

The two words were said so proudly and with such a happy light in the eyes, that Mr. Duncan felt quite anxious himself to meet this brother, and asked:

“Is he at home?”

“He is at the other end of the farm, attending to some work there, but will be back in a little while to dinner, and will then be at leisure.”

“I am sorry, then, that I will not see him till later; for I only meant to disturb you a few moments, long enough to give you a glimpse of the old man who is to look after you for a while.”

“But you have nothing else to do?” she asked.

“Nothing particular; but I can amuse myself looking about.”

“John will be so disappointed if you do not stay and dine with us,” she said, simply. “I can have dinner a little earlier, if you prefer.”

She was so earnest that Mr. Duncan was amused, as he replied :

“ My dear young lady, I have some respect for you and your packing. I know girls always have a thousand and one last things to do before going away.”

“ Not all girls,” said Helen, laughing, “ for I am one, and my trunk is locked and strapped. If that is your only reason for not staying, you—— But perhaps you would rather not,” she said, suddenly, looking at him earnestly.

“ It is not often, Miss Carter,” he said, replying with equal earnestness, “ that I receive such a cordial invitation ; and you can hardly understand the great pleasure it gives me to accept.”

A word to Mammy Tot was all that was necessary to insure a dinner with such changes as Helen deemed advisable, and then she could return to her guest and question him in regard to the different members of her uncle’s family ; for apart from the fact that there was a cousin near her own age, she knew little concerning them. In the midst of a description of them, a child’s voice was heard calling in a discontented tone :

“ Sister ! Sister ! ”

The next moment the door was thrown open and in rushed a bright, rosy-cheeked boy whose hat had fallen from his head but was still hanging around his neck. He held a ball in one hand, and said complainingly and very rapidly, pausing to catch his breath at intervals :

“ Maud’s as mean—as mean as she can be. She won’t

play and she won't even speak to me. She's got the dumps and—and I don't like girls with the dumps."

Helen did not try to stop him until he had entirely finished; and then she said gently, putting an arm about him:

"I am afraid you have forgotten something, dear, or did you not notice that there was company here?"

The little fellow hung his head a moment, and then holding out his hand, allowed it to be taken by Mr. Duncan, who, after asking a few questions, released him. Then, as though conscious of having done his duty, he turned once more to Helen and said:

"Please make Maud play with me. I'm lonely."

"What! with all the beautiful sunshine outside? Where is Maud, dear?"

"She's upstairs on your bed; and she says she's not going to leave it till you go away. She's just horrid."

"Haven't you made a mistake of some kind, dear?" said Helen, with an arm about him again. "If you really thought she was horrid, I don't think you would want her to play with you. Ah! here comes a dear little playmate! I think she will be glad of some one too." To her surprise, however, the child, a golden-haired one of three years, went directly to Mr. Duncan and without hesitation asked:

"Is you doin' ter take sister 'Len away? Maud says so."

"Yes, sister's going away with me this afternoon," said Mr. Duncan; "but won't you come and talk to me?"

"Me don't like you," she said, turning at once to Helen and burying her face in her lap. Helen lifted her from the floor, and the child put her arms around her neck and laid her head on her shoulder, saying as she did so: "Me don't want you go way. Me hav no one mind dolly."

"Yes, you will," said her brother, somewhat impatiently. "Brother John will do it. He can do anything."

Thinking it best to manage the children by themselves, Helen took them from the room and did not appear herself until dinner time. By that time Mr. Duncan had met both John and Mrs. Carter. The latter had intended staying in her room till the excitement of Helen's departure had passed; but the arrival of a stranger, and one from New York, roused her and took her to the dining room.

It was a meal Mr. Duncan long remembered, and of which he often spoke; for while everything was plain and simple, it was particularly inviting. No elaborate preparations had been made on his account, and yet he felt very sure that he was heartily welcome by two, at least, of those at the table. One member of the family he did not see during his visit. Maud's grief over Helen's departure was such that she refused to be comforted. She was the child Mrs. Carter had brought with her, and at one time had been quite delicate. Taking the part of nurse as well as housekeeper, Helen had devoted herself to the child until, as she grew older and developed into rather an awkward, bashful girl, she had looked to Helen

for sympathy and help. She realized now what a loss her adopted sister would be, and wept and moaned like one to whom the world had lost all its brightness. Next to leaving John, Helen felt distressed at leaving Maud. She knew the sensitive nature of the child, but also knew what influence and help could do for her. She had talked to her a good deal lately about the place she could make for herself in her home.

"If I could do things like you, I would not mind trying," said the child.

"I was not much older than you when I began," said Helen. "I did not know any more."

In this way she tried to make Maud feel that she could in a measure take her place, though she left her strongest argument till the last. It was while she was in her room that she took the opportunity, and after talking to her for a while, said :

"There is one thing, Maud, I am going to ask you to do as a favor to me. You are only a little girl, dear, but you can do things that will make me very happy, and some one else too. I want you to look after Brother John for me."

"But, sister, I can't do that."

"Yes, you can. You can look over his clothes every week and see that Annie keeps them mended while you keep them in order in his drawers, and see that his room is kept as he likes it; and then, if you only would, you might fix nice little things for him to eat. You know what he likes."

"But I couldn't do it like you do."

"Never mind, you can try; and even if you fail, John will be so pleased."

"It's different with you, sister. Everybody likes you."

"Then I would make up my mind, if I were you, that everybody should like me. There is no reason why they should not, for God has given you a kind little heart, and if you will only forget self and try every day to think of something you can do for some one else, you have no idea how happy you will be; and happiness can show in the face, you know, and can spread itself around over others. I shall pray to God every day to help you, dear, and I am very sure if you do the same thing and try your best, that I will have a little sister to be proud of some day. Then, I am going to ask you, too, if you won't go to Brother John sometimes and talk to him. Don't let him feel, while I am away, that he has no little sister who is glad to sit with and walk and talk with him."

While Helen was thus talking to her adopted sister and leaving behind her not only words, but an influence that was to make those words seem more impressive in the future, Mammy Tot was interviewing Mr. Duncan. She had watched her opportunity, and when she had found him alone had said:

"Ye's sho' dat chile, Miss Helen, ain't gwine want fur nuthin', ef she's sick er nuthin', whar she gwine?"

"I hope not, certainly," said Mr. Duncan, surprised at the question.

“Ye see,” continued Mammy Tot, “ole missus, when she’s adyin’, done lef’ er chillen an’ granchillen ter dis yere ole col’ed ’ooman ter keer fur ef dey’s leastways en trouble. Dey ain’t ben de time when Miss Helen ain’t hed Mammy Tot ter keer fur her. I’s ben a studyin’ ’bout dat ting when she’s away. Ef she’s sick and wants me, how I gwine know? She ain’t gwine send fur me, kase she tink it take heaps o’ money ter git dar; but me an’ de ole man done lay by some, an’ dey’s all de money de fambly done make on de cotton crap dis summer wot ain’t ben teched, an’ we kin sell de critter, needs be.”

“You mean me to understand, then, that if Miss Helen is sick, or needs you, you would like to know?”

“Dat I would.”

“And if I promise you that if you are needed you shall be sent for, will it make you more comfortable?”

“De good Lawd gwine bress ye sho’ fur dat word,” said Mammy Tot, clasping her hands. But she had no opportunity for saying more, as John Carter came into the room; and before very long Helen herself appeared in a neatly fitting cloth suit that had served for best two winters and was now to be used for traveling.

Helen’s plan was to start a little early and stop on the way to bid her aunt good-bye; but she was nowhere to be found, and Cassy knew nothing of her whereabouts. When they were at the depot, however, she appeared suddenly, and handing Helen a lunch basket, with a muttered remark about the miserable stuff she would get to eat, disappeared almost as suddenly as she had come.

CHAPTER VI.

MEETING NEW RELATIONS.

THOSE who have always lived in the bustle and whirl of a great city can scarcely appreciate the feeling that comes over one who is brought in contact with it for the first time. To Helen, who had been brought up in a very quiet place, the rush and confusion that greeted her in Jersey City frightened her; and by the time she was placed in her uncle's carriage in New York, surrounded by a perfect network of vehicles of all kinds and great masses of humanity moving hurriedly in various directions, she was trembling from excitement. She never quite remembered how she thanked Mr. Duncan for his kindness, but she always did remember that long drive and the feeling she had that something terrible must happen, until they reached the more quiet streets. She tried to talk, but found it hard to do more than reply to her uncle's questions; and he, not understanding her feelings and finding her rather absent-minded when he spoke to her, pronounced her in his own mind "a very uninteresting, plain-looking girl," and he even wondered at himself for having sent for her without ever having seen her. He was glad when he could hand her over to her aunt, a tall, handsome woman, in a black silk dress so heavily laden with glittering,

jingling jet, that Helen wondered how she could possibly walk in it.

Mrs. Carter touched Helen's cheek lightly with her lips, said some pleasant little things, and then, explaining that her Cousin Adele was at her Byron class but would return before very long, placed her in the care of a maid who was to take her to her room; and she was told that she would have time to rest and dress before dinner.

Left to herself, she looked about and found her room a very beautiful one, with heavy curtains at the windows and a bright fire in the grate. It was much more elegant than any she had ever seen, and yet, when she had seated herself in a low chair before the fire, she hid her face in her hands and wished with all her heart that she was back in the dear old room at home; wished that she had her arms about dear John, and that she was never going to leave him again. Somehow, everything seemed so different from what she had expected. But what would John say if he knew she was homesick already? She must stop that, and rising, she proceeded to remove her wraps and freshen herself up. Scarcely had she done so, when a servant announced the arrival of her trunk. That, at least, was one familiar object, and it did her good to see it. It was like a little bit of home set down in the midst of all this strangeness. Opening it quickly that she might have more familiar objects about her, she saw at once John's illuminated text, and with a cry of joy, took it and read the following words:

“Count that day lost whose low descending sun
Views from thy hands no worthy action done.”

“How like John!” she said, with tears in her eyes, then added, rather mournfully: “There will be many, many lost days for me, I am afraid. If it was John, now, he is always doing good, unselfish things; but I——, here I am because my uncle, out of the kindness of his heart, invited me and wanted me to have a good time; and what are the first feelings I have? Gratitude, and a desire to show him that I appreciate his kindness? No, no; for all I want is to be at home again. Oh, John dear, how could I ever leave you!”

She was on the point of bursting into tears, when a small package attracted her attention. Examining it curiously she found the purse John had been commissioned to secrete in her trunk, and with it a little note from John himself.

“Just think of your having a fairy godmother,” it said. “What she has secreted for you in this purse, I do not know, nor am I at liberty to tell you how it came, nor when; whether down the chimney, or through the window; nor the color of the cloak the dear old lady wore. You can’t guess, either; so all you have to do is to thank her in your heart, and use the gift, as I am sure my little sister will, wisely. I can imagine your eyes opening wide in wonder, but it is of no use; you’ll have to give up wondering. Leave it to John to do the wondering—first, as to how and when you will find this, and if you may not be a little bit homesick at first among strange scenes

and strange people. It will not last long, dear, for the scenes will grow more and more familiar, and my little sister has such a bright, happy, helpful disposition that no one can know her without loving her ; and you know, dear, what power that gives one for good or evil. Be your own bright, happy self, ready to do any work the Master may have for you. Do not trouble yourself about the future, but remember it is the to-days that make the yesterdays ; to-morrow may never come. Watch, and take care of the to-days, then, remembering that John is praying constantly that you may be kept under the shadow of His wings and may have his——”

Here Helen's tears flowed so freely that they dimmed her eyes and she could not for a moment read the last words. She wondered to herself how it was that John always understood her feelings, and knew just what to say to do her good ; for nothing in the world could have done her the good wrought by those words of his. A faint knock at the door caused her to open it a little wonderingly. A pair of dark eyes shaded by heavy bangs looked up at her, as a child's voice asked :

“ I'm Bessie. May I come in ? ”

“ Indeed you may,” said Helen, dropping on her knees and putting her arms about the child's neck and kissing her ; “ but you knocked so faintly, I hardly heard you.”

“ I thought you might be resting or asleep, and was afraid to knock loud.”

“ You need never be afraid of that, dear, for I never lie down in the daytime.” As she spoke she closed the

door and drew the child to the fire. Here was some one she could love and talk to ; and she at once set about interesting the child and trying to make a friend of her. Bessie proposed soon that they should go to the "sitting room," explaining that it was the room where she and Tom spent most of their time, and they liked it better than any room in the house. It was a pleasant room, with pot flowers in the windows, and, what pleased Helen at once, a beautiful gray parrot with a scarlet tail. She tried to get him to talk, but all he would say was, gruffly, "What! what!"

"I say, Bess," said a boy's voice at the door, "has the new cousin come?"

"Yes, here she is," said Helen, stepping forward and presenting herself. "I suppose you are Tom."

For answer Tom came fully into the room and stood with wide-open eyes gazing at the new arrival. A prolonged whistle at last greeted Helen, whose color had risen rapidly during the boy's scrutiny.

"I say, Bess," said Tom, "won't Adele be surprised? There'll be some fun now. She don't look a bit green, does she?"

"Did you expect me to be very green?" said Helen, anxious to say something, yet hardly knowing what.

"As green as grass, as tall as a bean pole, and as awkward as a waddly goose," was the reply. "Adele will be taken aback. You see, because you come from some place she never heard of, she thinks you are a kind of Hottentot, and she just thinks she's going to have a good

time playing missionary and trying to civilize you. She's set her heart on that, and I really believe she has persuaded father to give her an allowance to be used for clothes for you. I am rather surprised that she did not have a photographer on the spot to give her a chance in the future to show two pictures, one entitled, 'When she Came,' the other, 'When she Left.'"

"Stop, Tom," said Helen; "it is not right for you to speak so of your sister, and it is not right for me to listen."

"Just you make up your mind at once, cousin," said Tom, with a quick movement of the head, "that Tom Carter never yet was known to do what he should. When he does, there'll be something wrong somewhere. You see, I am the thorn in the family flesh. I'm wanted to be a dude, and I shy off to the other extreme as far as possible. But hist! Here comes the princess. Now for some fun."

Surely the girl who came in just then must have heard Tom's remark, but if she did, she took no notice of it, as she said, turning to Helen:

"You have found your way to the children's sitting room, I see. I trust you will be able to make yourself contented until I can take you about and show you the sights. I suppose it all seems strange and very grand to you now."

"I was never in so large a place before," said Helen, simply.

"Well, there will be enough for you to see and learn

to turn your brain almost. I am kept very busy myself with calls, receptions, operas, etc. This afternoon I was at my Byron class. We meet twice a month and I will be glad to take you with me some time, if you care to study up a little first about Byron and his life."

"I say, Adele," said Tom, abruptly, "I'll bet a quarter she knows as much about Byron now as you do."

"When will you learn to act decently, Tom?" said his sister, impatiently. "We can't expect Helen to be so well informed in some things as we who have been differently brought up; but if she is bright and quick, she can soon pick up many things that will be of great use to her. I am ashamed of you, but I must go and get ready for dinner. I will come back and take you down," she said, as she moved away. She had come in with a great deal of manner, enveloped almost in fur, and she had kept up a patronizing air that had made Helen feel rather uncomfortable, but she did not show it when Tom said quickly:

"I say, you know who Byron was, don't you?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then why didn't you say so, and take the princess down a peg?"

"I didn't think it best, just then."

"You didn't, didn't you! Well, there's something queer about you I must say; but I think I rather like you, on the whole. You didn't do much to take the princess down, but I believe you've got grit and spunk; and I like that. Did you see the surprise in the old

lady's eyes—she's too dignified to show it any other way—when she saw you? I knew it by the tone of her voice. You were not quite green enough to suit."

"Stop, Tom," said Helen, decidedly. "I won't listen to another word."

"Then I'm off to rig myself out a little, or I'll hear from the governor at dinner."

CHAPTER VII.

CONTRAST.

IF Adele expected Helen to be bewildered and confused by the elegance of her surroundings at dinner, she was disappointed; for Helen showed no surprise in her manner, which was quiet and much more natural than her cousin's. Her first feelings of terror, followed by loneliness, had passed away, and Mr. Carter looked at her a little wonderingly; for she scarcely seemed the same girl he had met so short a time ago. She was plain, and yet there was something attractive in her plainness. His own daughter was gorgeously attired in a dress open at the throat and loaded elsewhere with trimmings, while her fingers and wrists were generously covered with jewels. She had expected "the little country girl" to envy her and to be quite overshadowed by her greatness. Indeed, she had expected her at once to become her slave; but somehow she did not seem to succeed as she had expected. Mr. Carter knew enough of his daughter's character to guess at part that was going on in her mind, and looking from one to the other and noticing the contrast between them, he almost regretted having brought the girl with the fresh, happy look and natural manners, to a place where so much was artificial. Could she keep from being contaminated? No. She would be like

others when she left ; but just now he liked to watch her face light up when she talked. He even tried to make her talk by asking her about different members of the family. When he mentioned John, her eyes sparkled, and she said brightly :

“ He is one of Longfellow’s ‘ heroes in the strife.’ I don’t think a truer, nobler man ever lived.”

“ I believed in heroes once, but not now,” said Adele, with a shrug of her shoulders intended to convey the impression that she did not think much of any one who did ; “ and I care very little for Longfellow. I admire men of more depth.”

“ Oh ! ” said Helen, quickly, as her eyes sparkled again and the color came excitedly into her face, “ how can you help liking him ? To me, he is full of depth ; searching down into human nature, and putting into beautiful, helpful words, thoughts and feelings we would otherwise scarce understand, or even know the existence of. And he says such soft, tender, useful things, giving us new ideas and a desire to live up to them. His own life, too, has been so beautiful.”

“ Better dot that down for future use, Adele,” said Tom.

“ Be quiet, sir,” said Mr. Carter, in a quick, stern voice.

The boy was quiet, but suspiciously so. For his father, noticing that he had stopped eating and was staring fixedly at Helen, asked the cause.

“ I’m watching to see her eat with her knife. Adele said she would.”

"Leave the room, sir," said his father, in a voice of stern command.

"Much obliged to you for giving me the opportunity sir," said Tom, rising.

Helen's color had risen; and she had quickly dropped her knife and fork when Tom spoke. She recovered enough to say:

"Uncle, I don't think Tom meant to be rude."

"Yes, he did. The boy has been going from bad to worse lately, until he has become perfectly unbearable; and I see nothing to do now"—here he looked at Mrs. Carter, who had sighed deeply when Tom was sent away—"but to look out for a boarding school for him, where he will be more strictly dealt with than here."

The rest of the dinner was by no means comfortable, and Helen thought it would never end. Mr. Carter would have nothing more to say; and his looks were so dark and forbidding, that it seemed to affect every one else. Helen was glad when it was all over, and her aunt informed her that Adele was expecting company, and if she did not care to stay downstairs, or was tired, she could go right to her room. She eagerly availed herself of this opportunity of writing to John, and saying good-night pleasantly to her aunt and cousin who, in their sweeping trains, stood at the foot of the stairs as she went up, she hurried off; but before she reached her room, Tom's voice called her and asked her to come to the sitting room.

"I say," he said, awkwardly, when she came in, "I

didn't mean to hurt your feelings. It was Adele. Don't you hate her?"

"No," said Helen, decidedly; "and you have no right to say or do things to make me feel uncomfortably toward her."

"I can't help it. She puts on so many airs, she just makes me do it."

"Yes, you can help it, if you want to."

"You don't know. Just wait till you know me a little better and you'll see I can't help it. No one would ever say that of me that you said of your brother."

"That may be your own fault. I don't think anybody could be quite like John; but there are lots of others—"

"But you don't think I could be one?"

"I'm not so sure of that. Have you ever tried?"

"Nobody ever cared."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I know. No one cares for me. They'd all like to be rid of me. I did think at one time of going off somewhere and never letting any one know where I was."

"Oh, how dreadful, Tom! Just think how distressed every one would be."

"Don't believe it. The governor and I fight about every time we meet. You see he wants me to study law, and I want to study medicine, or something like that; and so we have it. He says law, and I say no; and up and down the scale we go. There's a rhyme! Stop now, while I make a wish."

His gestures had been so perfectly absurd as he made

the rhyme that Helen, in spite of herself, could not help laughing ; but when she was sober enough to command her voice, she said :

“ Tom, did you ever seriously discuss the subject with your father, and tell him exactly how you felt about it ? ”

“ No use, I assure you. I told him one day that I wanted to be a doctor ; and the next day he found out that I had chloroformed Adele’s favorite cat and chopped her up to see how she breathed. That was the last of my studying medicine, and I knew it.”

“ But what a dreadful thing to do ! ”

“ Doctors have to do such things ; and I thought I might as well begin at once, and perhaps I could discover something of value to the scientific world.”

“ I’m afraid you don’t try to do things in the right way. It seems to me if you would go to your father and tell him in the right way what you want, and not do such dreadful things, he would listen to you.”

“ You might do that, but Tom Carter would only make a botch of it. If it was not for Bess, I would cut and run, anyway ; but you see she’s lonely often, and I can keep her company and tell her things to make her laugh. She and I get along all right together, though she tries to scold me some. She’s all that keeps me here.”

“ Let me help her keep you here, then, for a while ; for I want you to help me.”

“ Hello ! What’s up ? ”

“ Only this. I don’t eat with my knife, Tom, and I do know something of Byron, if I do live so far from

New York ; but there are a good many other things that will be new and strange to me, and I will be so glad if you will tell me when I do or say anything that is odd."

"For true ! Do you mean that ?"

"Of course I do."

"And you think if I tried you might like me well enough to let me touch that brother with a ten-foot pole ?"

"Oh, Tom !" said Helen, reproachfully.

"I say, you're my cousin, really and truly. No shamming ?"

"Of course I am."

"Then give us your hand. I'm proud of it, and I'll —no, I won't, either, for I suppose I'll be just as bad as ever ; but I say, I am glad you're my cousin, though."

Bessie here appeared, and the subject was changed at once, Helen inquiring something of the studies of both, for she saw schoolbooks about. Bessie, she learned, went to a kindergarten, and the books were all Tom's. Tom was very much surprised to find how familiar Helen was with the subjects of which they treated, even to his Latin books.

"I say," he asked, "where did you pick up so much ? I thought —"

"That we have no schools in the South ? Then you are mistaken," said Helen ; "and I am afraid you are just as ignorant of life outside of New York as I am inside. It is true I owe much of the little I do know to John. There are many books and subjects on which I

would be much more ignorant than I am, if John had not kindly devoted many of his evenings to reading aloud to me. We learned many things together in that way; for John would only choose subjects then that I could enjoy as well as he."

"A gentleman to see you, miss," said a tall, white-aproned individual, handing her a card on a silver waiter.

"Me!" she exclaimed in surprise, hesitating a moment before taking the card; but James, the waiter, nodded his head and murmured indistinctly something that induced her to take the card.

"How very kind!" she exclaimed. "It is Mr. Duncan."

He had come, he said, to let her know he had telegraphed to her brother that she had arrived. He thought she might feel more comfortable if she knew. The tears rose to her eyes as she tried to thank him for his thoughtfulness; for anything done for John was more of a pleasure to her than if done for herself. It was like a little bit of sunshine, too, to see Mr. Duncan again, because he had seen and known something of her home. Again her uncle watched her as she laughingly told of her feelings after Mr. Duncan left her.

"I suppose you and uncle will think me very foolish and childish," she said, "but you can hardly imagine the effect of so much bustle and confusion on me. I suppose any one who had been brought up as quietly as I would be startled at first; but hardly so much as I."

"I should have thought of that," said Mr. Duncan, "and prepared you for it." And then he told her that his mother would like very much to meet her, but was too great an invalid to call on her; and he would like, with her aunt's permission, to take her in a day or two to see her. Mrs. Carter was rather surprised that people of the Duncans' wealth and position should have any desire to know this "poor relation" of her husband's; but when Mr. Duncan explained that his mother had known Helen's grandmother, she supposed that was really the reason. It was a freak of the old lady's, but the Duncans were people to be treated with some consideration, and she must see that Helen made the most of this opportunity; for it was possible it might be of benefit to Adele, as the Duncans knew people she would be glad to have her own daughter know.

"Was it Grandma Forbes your mother knew?" asked Helen.

"Yes. Possibly you have heard her speak of her old friend, Hattie Skinner."

"Of course I have," said Helen, with sparkling eyes. "And she is your mother! How glad I shall be to meet her! Why, it was at her father's house that my great-grandmother was married."

"Yes, and my mother has the wedding dress."

"The same she wore to the ball the night she saved her lover's life! Oh, Mr. Duncan, I always thought that was one of the bravest and noblest acts! I am so glad you told me this. I used to love to have grandma tell

me the story; and now it will be so pleasant to see something actually belonging to it."

Adele and her visitor, sitting in an adjoining room, whose portieres were but partially closed, could not help hearing much of this conversation, and Adele explained that Helen was a cousin from the South; that her family was one of those that had lost heavily during the war and had not yet recovered. Her father, she said, had offered to take this niece for the winter and give her the advantages of being in society for that time.

"I should like to meet her," said Mr. Edmands, a tall, rather handsome man, and one on whom Adele was anxious to make an impression.

"You shall, as soon as I can make her presentable," said Adele. "I must put a little polish on her manners, as well as dress; and then——"

"And then sit back and enjoy the fruits of your labor," said Mr. Edmands. "Be indulgent enough, then, Miss Carter, to let me share that pleasure with you, by first knowing her as she is now."

They had talked in a low tone, but Mr. Edmands' voice had sounded so peculiarly when he made that last remark, that Adele had looked at him curiously before replying; but her delight that he should actually express such interest in any of her actions was so great that as soon as Mr. Duncan took his leave, she stepped to the other side of the portiere, Mr. Edmands following her. Very easily and gracefully Helen acknowledged the introduction, though the color mounted quickly to her

cheeks ; for Mr. Edmands, in dress and manners, was so “ faultlessly elegant,” as Adele said, that it almost made her uncomfortable.

“ I did not like him half so well as Mr. Duncan,” she told Tom afterward, and Tom had laughed and told her that Mr. Duncan was old enough to be her father, while Mr. Edmands was only old enough to be her cousin ; and he thought Adele meant he should be, if she could manage it.

Before leaving, that night, Mr. Edmands himself had again expressed a desire to watch the results of Adele’s “ improvements.”

Again she had looked at him curiously, for she could not quite understand his manner yet, but supposed it due to his Boston training ; for he had come from there to New York to follow out some scientific investigation, and she had not known him very long. But he was rich, and worth cultivating.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOHN WOULD NOT WISH IT.

THERE was so much of interest to see and do, that Helen found the days flying away very rapidly. She grew accustomed to much of the confusion and bustle, but Broadway was still a terror to her. It seemed that accidents must happen there. Most of her mornings were spent at the Art School; and how she did enjoy it! After luncheon she was free, as she expressed it to Tom and Bessie, who usually shared some of their spare time with her. The three became fast friends, and were occasionally allowed to take little expeditions together, which was a delight to them all.

“I can’t see how you like to have those children always hanging around you,” said Adele, petulantly, one day when she wanted Helen to do something for her, and Helen had excused herself on the ground that she had promised Tom and Bessie to go out with them. Adele herself was disappointed in Helen, for she did not find her quite so easily managed as she expected; and she found her with opinions of her own that clashed with hers. Had Helen been other than she was, there would have been difficulty at once; but she had been trying for so long to control her quick temper, that she was able now to prevent a scene that would have caused serious

trouble at the very beginning of her visit. Adele had visited her on the morning after her arrival, and inquired into the state of her wardrobe in a very patronizing way. Helen had taken it pleasantly, and said that what seemed a very full one to her would probably seem very small to Adele herself. It did not take her long to display the contents of her trunk, and it was with some pride that she showed the new things John had given her.

“They will do, as far as they go,” said Adele; “but of course you know you must have more of them. What do you expect to do for dinner dresses, opera hats, ball dresses, etc? You must let me get you some clothes at once. I will see to it to-day. You can come with me and get an opera bonnet and some other things that you will need at once, for father intends taking seats for the opera some time this week.”

“Then tell him, please, not to get one for me. I would rather not go.”

“Rather not go! Don’t you like music?”

“Yes, very much.”

“Then why don’t you want to go?”

“I do not think John would wish it.”

“Do you always do as John wishes?” asked Adele, with a sneer.

“I try to,” was the quiet reply.

“And does John disapprove of theatres, balls, and all such things?”

“Yes.”

"Then John's a stupid old prig."

Helen's eyes flashed and her hands were clenched with the effort she made to keep back the words that rose to her lips at this. When she did speak, her voice was choked as she said :

"You have never seen John, or you would not say such a thing. Please don't ever do it again."

"Well, I don't see what in the world you came here for, if you are not going out anywhere!"

Helen would not allow herself to show just what her feelings were, but tried to let Adele see that while she could not accept just what was offered her, there was much she would gladly accept in the way of help and advice. She succeeded in so changing the aspect of affairs that when Adele left her, though she was disappointed in her, she could not help admiring her independence, but could not quite understand how any girl could refuse fine clothes and not care for balls and theatres.

There was a "quiet little dinner" given by Mrs. Carter that evening, and Helen was rather shy and confused at first by the elegance of everything about her, but she soon overcame the feeling and became very much interested in her neighbor, a rather plain-looking man, but one who could make himself entertaining, "if he chose." Adele thought him intensely stupid, and was glad to get him as far away from her as possible. He himself said to Mr. Carter, at the end of the evening :

"It has been a great treat to me to be with your young niece to-night. Her freshness and originality are a great

rest and relief after the intensely conventional manners to which one is accustomed. She tells me she is paying her first visit to a large city. Don't keep her here long enough to spoil her. It would be a shame."

"Glad you admire her, Thompson," said his host.

"I'm not the only one, I assure you. There have been several others who have been attracted by her perfectly natural, easy manners and her original way of looking at things. She has such a true, honest face that it can't help being attractive."

And yet Helen was simply dressed, in the white flannel her brother had given her, and wore no ornaments save a very old pin and ring that had been her mother's and grandmother's before her. Adele had offered her any amount of jewelry, but, while thanking her and assuring her that she appreciated the offer, she declined because, she said, she was not in the habit of wearing it and would not feel like herself with it on. Adele was dressed in the height of the fashion, with bare neck and arms, and was in every way a contrast to Helen.

"Do you not wish, now, you had let me get you a fine dress to wear?" she asked.

"No. I could not wear anything of that kind," said Helen, quietly. "It would not suit me, and I would not look like myself at all."

"Just wait awhile and you will change your mind and be glad enough to have them. You don't suppose mother and I are going to let you appear everywhere in that one dress, do you? We have no intention of having you

talked of as our 'poor relation.' To-night I suppose you will want to take notes and won't care to talk much, so it is just as well you should not attract much notice. You will soon grow accustomed to things, and when mother and I give our grand entertainment at Christmas, you will be ready enough to have a fine dress and other things; and you will want to attend theatres and balls by that time, too."

To Adele's surprise, Helen seemed at no loss for anything to say that evening, and there also seemed to be people who were glad to talk to her. She wondered what the girl found to say, and if any one was making fun of her. Once, hearing a subdued laugh from her nearest neighbor, she thought it might be so until she looked around and found that Helen, too, was laughing.

"How is the Society for the Improvement of Southern Girls coming on?" asked Mr. Edmands, at this moment.

"Slowly," was the reply. "The Southern girl refuses to be improved."

"Self-satisfied?"

"All kinds of horrible things. 'Brother John' is an enemy to progress; does not approve of theatres, balls, etc. His unfortunate influence must be overcome before much can be hoped for in the way of reform. It will take time."

"Then it will make a more interesting study for me."

Once, during the evening, he had gone to Helen and spoken to her; but she was glad when he left, for she

could not understand him and could never be quite comfortable with him.

To John, she wrote a very bright account of this dinner, speaking of some of the people she met as being *so* entertaining, because they had traveled and seen so many places and such interesting people. Others, she said, did not seem to know what to say or do, and there were some she could not like. They seemed rude, but she supposed it was only a manner she did not understand. No mention was made in any of her letters to John of the discussion she and Adele had had regarding dress, but the subject was brought up again in a very unexpected way. Entering the house one day at the same time as her uncle, she was asked if she would not like to see his smoking room. But once inside, he did not give her a chance to look about much before he asked :

“ Why is it you come in from a walk with a bright, beautiful color, and Adele comes in so tired that she looks pale ? ”

“ I don’t know, uncle, unless it is because I like the fresh air and it just can’t help doing me good.”

“ I don’t wonder,” he said. Then he asked quickly: “ Is it true that you do not care to go to the opera ? ”

“ Yes, uncle, I would rather not just yet.” And then she thanked him heartily for having invited her to New York, but explained that she had never been to the theatre or opera and would like to think about it a little more before she did go. “ You see,” she said, “ when I was younger and wanted to go to something of the kind,

John told me I was not old enough, and he explained that there were many people who, for various reasons, thought it best to keep away from such things entirely. He asked me if I would not be willing to let him decide for me until I was old enough to decide for myself. That is why I have never been yet. Before I left home, John talked to me on the subject and told me the time had come for me to decide such things for myself; but he advised me to look into the matter carefully before I did decide. He told me there were a great many good people who went to such places and felt there was no harm in it, and that I would probably meet some of them. He told me to examine the subject from all sides, and to see if I thought it injured one's influence for good; to make up my mind if I would just as soon go to a dancing Christian for comfort and advice as to one who lived a more quiet and simple life. I hope you will not feel hurt, uncle, nor think I do not appreciate your kindness; but until I have decided these points, I would like to keep on what I know to be the safe side."

"How about clothes?" asked Mr. Carter, without commenting on what she had just said. "Is that a New York costume you have on?"

"This?" said Helen, in some surprise. "No, uncle. John gave me this."

"Then it is one of the two 'decent' costumes Adele says you own, and she tells me you refuse to have anything more. How do you expect to go through a whole season with only these?"

"You do not like them, uncle?" said Helen, in a distressed tone.

"I am speaking of you, my child. When you see the way other people dress that you will meet and the variety of costumes they have, I am afraid you will regret not having more."

"But, uncle I am not accustomed to living and dressing like Adele, and it would not be suitable for me—but—if you think—"

"I think, my child," said her uncle, quickly, "that I like you much better as you are than if you dressed as my own daughter does, and I shall be glad if you can stick to your simple tastes as long as you are here; but remember, I am perfectly able and willing to give you anything you need. It is likely, my child, you may want a variety, or find that what you have will not last. You need not hesitate to come to me at any time when you want anything. Do you understand?"

"Yes, uncle, and I am *so* much obliged to you."

"Suppose I give you an allowance, as I do Adele."

"I think I would rather not, please, if you do not mind."

"Why?"

"I might want to spend it when there was no necessity, and might grow too fond of having it."

"I'd like to hear Adele say that," said Mr. Carter, sadly. "Well, tell me now; if John was able to give you another dress, what would you like it to be?"

"I'd rather have a pretty dark red dress to wear here

at home in the evenings than anything else," she said, simply.

"Then why not let me give you that? I think I would like to see you in just such a dress, but I would prefer having you select it yourself. I like your taste."

"Do you, uncle? I am so glad." And under those circumstances, she found it a pleasure to accept what her uncle offered so willingly.

That ended for the time being all discussion on the subject of dress or amusements; and Helen soon began to feel quite at home among her new surroundings. She saw something interesting almost every day, but perhaps she enjoyed the picture galleries as much as anything else. The first of those she saw was at Mr. Duncan's home. Mrs. Duncan, his mother, "a dear old lady, with such a happy face no one would ever imagine she had not walked for years," as Helen described her in a letter to John, was charmed with "the little Southern girl;" and when she found that she was fond of art, invited her to spend a whole afternoon with her when she could look at the pictures as long as she cared to. That afternoon was a pleasant memory to Helen and one that was described in most glowing terms to John. At its close, Mrs. Duncan told Helen that twice a month she gave a little afternoon tea, and her friends came to see her as she could not visit them; and she further said that she would be glad to have her little Southern friend with her always at such times.

"Many of my friends," she said, "are artists of whom

you have heard ; others are lovers of art ; and some are writers with whose work you are familiar. If you think you care to help me entertain at such times, my dear, I will write a note to your aunt and ask her permission."

"I would love dearly to see the people," was the reply, "but I do not know anything about entertaining."

"My son thinks differently and I can trust him," said Mrs. Duncan, smiling. And so it became a settled thing; for she was very sure Mrs. Carter would not refuse her consent, and she knew that meeting the people who attended her little teas would be an education to Helen. In her note to Mrs. Carter, she invited both her and her daughter to attend the receptions, which pleased Helen ; but perhaps Mrs. Carter herself was most pleased, for she had long wanted to meet some of the people whom she knew visited Mrs. Duncan. She would have been better pleased, however, if Adele had been in Helen's place just then.

CHAPTER IX.

“THE OLD GENTLEMAN IS A TRUMP.”

HELEN surprised herself as well as others by the rapid progress she made in her art studies; and yet there was much she still wanted to accomplish before Christmas, which was fast approaching. There were sketches she was anxious to finish in time to send to John, dear John, whom she still longed, at times, so eagerly to see, and who, she knew, would like to see her. For his sake, as well as her own, she was glad she was improving so rapidly in her work. He would be so pleased, and she began to feel that she might, in time, be able really to put her talent to some practical use. She had such happy visions of what she would do when that time came, and how she would surprise John. Such wonderful things could be done then, and they would be so happy together! His letters now were full of love, and were bright, happy ones; but she knew he missed her, particularly on Sunday, for then they were together more than at any other time. She was surprised to see how little church-going was done by her uncle's family. The first Sunday she spent with them was a rainy one, and Mrs. Carter did not go to church because of a headache. Mr. Carter never went, she was told, and Adele, never in the rain. Tom did not care for it, but rather than have

Helen go alone, would accompany her. She asked that Bessie might be allowed to go too, but it was of no use; so she and Tom went alone. On their way home, Helen asked Tom earnestly never to take her there again.

"I don't feel as though I had really and truly been to church," she said.

"Why not? That's the one mother and Adele attend, and they think it's tip-top."

"I suppose the way a person is brought up makes some difference. You see, Tom, I've been brought up differently from them, and I like to go where I can sing, and where other people sing, and where the minister is in earnest in everything he says and gives you something to think about all the week. Don't you have such churches here?"

"Never was in one."

When she reached home, Helen intended going to her aunt and trying to do something to relieve her headache, but Tom told her that his mother never allowed any one to go near her at such times, so she did not attempt it; but to her surprise, found after luncheon that her aunt was up and in the parlor entertaining company. Before she had been there long, she discovered that many Sundays were spent in the same way, at home, by her aunt and cousin. Some weeks had been more than usually gay ones, when many hours that should have been spent in sleep were devoted to the amusements of life. Some of that lost sleep was made up Sunday mornings.

"We always have company Sunday afternoon," ex-

plained Adele, "and I would not be fit to entertain any one after a whole week of gayety, if I did not have some rest."

On other occasions she went to church, but her conversation at luncheon was almost entirely confined to a description of costumes she had seen and the gossip she had heard on her way home. Helen had made up her mind after the first Sunday to find a church somewhere that was more like the one at home, and had interviewed her uncle on the subject, thinking he would understand better than any one else what she wanted, because he had gone to the old church when a boy. He promised to see what he could find for her, and the next Sunday told her he would go with her and they could decide together whether the church he had selected was what she wanted. Mrs. Carter and Adele expressed the greatest surprise at the idea of his going to church and not going with them, but he explained that Helen had come there on his invitation, and that he intended she should have everything done that could be done to make her stay a pleasant one.

"I did not know," he said, "when I sent for her, that she was so like, in character and disposition, my mother, one of the best women who ever lived. Now that I find her so, I mean that she shall be kept so, if possible."

It was a common thing after that for Helen and her uncle to go to church together morning and night, sometimes to one place and sometimes to another, for they found there were many churches, after all, that

came under the head of those they liked ; but there was one they decided on at last as suiting them better than the others, and to the surprise of the family, Mr. Carter went there alone one night when Helen was afraid to venture out on account of a sore throat. He explained that the minister, a man whom he admired in every sense of the word, was preaching a series of sermons at night and that he wanted particularly to hear that one. Bessie sometimes accompanied her father and cousin, but Tom could not be persuaded to do so.

“No ; I won’t go with the governor,” he would say, and no persuasion on the part of Helen could make him ; but she devoted her Sunday afternoons to the two children. She found they had been in the habit of lounging around with nothing particular to do, until Tom had conceived the idea of introducing some “blood and thunder” literature into the house, and reading scenes from it to Bessie. Very quietly and gently Helen changed all this, and tried to interest them in other things, succeeding so well that they soon enjoyed the change ; for she gave them something to do and think of through the week, and every week it was a little different.

“It is by watching and caring for the days and hours as they come, that we make the past a thing to be regretted or not,” she would say. She copied for them the motto John had given her and hung it in their sitting room.

“Oh, I say,” said Tom, when he saw it, “a fellow can’t

live up to that thing. You don't expect me to do a worthy act every day and Sunday too, do you?"

"You can do it, if you will," said Helen; "for there is One who will help you."

"I don't believe you do it, yourself," said Tom.

"No, I don't; but I am trying hard to do better, and it would help me very much if you would try too."

"I don't see how."

"Try it and find out."

By assuring them that they could help each other and help her to make life more what it should be, she interested them in things they had not cared for before, and was herself surprised to see the change in Tom. His manners became much more gentlemanly, and gradually, but slowly, he was dropping slang phrases. One day, a few days before Christmas, he went to Helen, excitedly, and told her that his father had made arrangements to send him to boarding school after the holidays.

"I'll just go to the bad, right off, if he does that," he said. "You must go to him and talk him out of it, Helen. He will do anything you ask him, and I am sure if I go there I'll run away or do something dreadful. You must talk to him at once."

"No, Tom, you are the one to do that."

"I! There would be a row then, for certain. You don't know father."

"I know him well enough to know that if you would once go to him in the right way and talk earnestly and

seriously about yourself, that you would find things different from what you think."

"Can't go to him in the right way, then. You will have to make up your mind to do it for me."

"No, Tom, I can't do that for you. It would only be a sort of half-way arrangement, and would not have an effect that would be quite satisfactory. Think the matter quietly and seriously over until to-morrow, and then we will talk of it again."

When to-morrow came, Helen found that he had thought seriously of it, but could not quite make up his mind to take the final step. "You may be right," he said, "and it might be better if I would talk to him once, but I just can't do it."

"Yes, you can, Tom. Suppose you make up your mind to go to him just now, without any further waiting. You know it's the lost opportunities of the present that make the regrets of the future."

"Helen, I know just as well that if I go to him now, I will say or do something I will be sorry for afterward."

"I don't think so, Tom; but if you do find yourself about to say anything you know you should not, just stop and pray a little silent prayer. Don't let this opportunity go by. It will only be harder another time."

"Well, here goes, but if it's all wrong when I come back, you'll think it's my fault, of course. You'll be here when I come back?"

"Yes."

"All right; I won't be a coward. I'll beard the lion in his den, and at once."

Long and patiently Helen waited for him, busying herself about some little things she had arranged to send home for Christmas presents; for a part of the money she found in the purse so mysteriously given her, had been at once set aside for that purpose. There were so many things she wanted for them, and fifty dollars, which was what she found in the purse, would get some of them, and leave her enough besides to put away in case anything should happen so that she would need more than John had given her. It seemed to her she had never enjoyed anything so much as arranging for these little gifts to send home, something for every one, from the book she knew John wanted on architectural drawing, to the pretty white aprons for Cassy and Mammy Tot. She had been making something besides for John's room, and was at work on it now, while waiting for Tom; for it must be done in time to send with the other things. There was something yet to be finished for Maud; a drawing she had done for her of a queer character who came to the art class to be sketched. Tom was gone so long that Helen began to fear there had been trouble after all, but when he did come, he said excitedly:

"I say, Helen, the old gentleman is a trump. I'm not to go away, after all. Hurrah! And do you know, he says if I have really and earnestly made up my mind that I would like to study medicine, he's willing to look into the matter when the time comes. Hurrah! Three

cheers for Helen Carter. She understood father better than I did."

"Hurrah! Ha, ha, ha! Whew!" cried Polly, moving her body rapidly up and down, as though very much excited over the news.

CHAPTER X.

A LETTER TO AUNT HAN.

A BOUT this time "Aunt Han" received a letter the reading of which was followed by some very curious actions on her part. Often in the past, when things had troubled Helen that she did not care to mention to John, she had gone to Aunt Han and opened her heart. She never quite understood how it was that, in spite of harsh, almost unfeeling words, she knew that her aunt understood and in her heart felt for her. She knew that in her own peculiar way her aunt loved her; and ever since John had told her of her early life, she had felt that she could not do too much to make her forget it. He had told her of her great beauty, and of her love for one who had acted toward her in such a way as to cause her whole character to change. She had lost faith in others, and seemed to delight in covering up all the good she did in the world, so that people might say and think hard things of her. It was partly to show her love for her that Helen talked as she did. It was partly now to let her aunt feel that she had not changed and that she still looked to her as she had done in the old life, that she had written the letter that so strangely affected Aunt Han. It read as follows:

"DEAR, DEAR AUNT HAN: If I only had wings, I would fly to you at this very moment and talk to you, as I used to do, of things I would not mention to John. You could not help me, auntie, except by letting me talk to you. That always helps me. John might try to do what he ought not to think of, so you must not let him see this. I told you how kind uncle has been in offering me an allowance, or anything I want in the way of clothes. I know it seems odd to my aunt and Adele, who have so many things, to see any one with so few; and I think it annoys them, at times, to see me 'always in the same rig,' as Adele says. They are to give a very elegant reception, just after Christmas, and are busy about new dresses. They have said decidedly that I must have something new, and I suppose it would be unkind and ungrateful in me to refuse; but everything they suggest is so different from what I have been accustomed to, that I should not feel like myself in it. They want me to dress as Adele and her friends do; but I can't, and I am sure John would not want me to. If they would only let me go myself and select what I would like, I think I might please them and still feel that I remain Helen Carter. They are afraid to trust me to do that, and so as yet we have not found anything that quite suits all of us; but we will in time, perhaps. If I would go to uncle and speak to him, I am sure he would give me the money and let me select a dress for myself, and he has been kind enough to say he likes my taste; but I am afraid that would hurt the feelings of my aunt and Adele.

"But I will not bother you about that any more. It has just done me a little good to mention it. Now I must tell you more than I did, in my last letter, of Mrs. Duncan. I had not seen my great-grandmother's dress then, but I have now, and it is so very handsome. I wish you could see it. It is a plain, cream-colored satin petticoat, with a heavily brocaded over-dress and funny little short-waisted body, and sleeves like great barrels. It seemed almost like some holy thing when I touched it and thought of the noble deeds that had been done in it. Mrs. Duncan herself is just the kind of a person I should think would do as grandmother did, if necessary. She has some of the quaintest and daintiest things that belonged to her own mother and grandmother, and she tells me the most delightful things about the

time when she and grandmother were girls together. I wish you could meet her.

"Does John go to see you often, auntie? I am sure he does, though; and I wish I could be with him sometimes. Does he miss me very, very much, auntie? I wish there was something I could do to help him. I told you about the money that good fairy godmother sent me. Do you know, I want so much to use it for a new, handsome suit of clothes and some books for John. It did not seem right for him to give me so much and have so little for himself; but I just knew John would not like it, really; and besides, I thought it might be best to put some of it away in case of accident, so that I would not have to send to him for anything more. It does make me feel easier to have it. So I have only used part of it for Christmas presents for the home people, and the rest is tucked away for any emergency.

"Adele expects a friend to visit her during the holidays. She is from Boston, I think. I have met a young gentleman from there who is living here now, a Mr. Edmands——"

Aunt Han hastily dropped the letter when she had read so far, and putting her spectacles off with a jerk, went to the door and called Cassy in a sharp, commanding voice. Only once before in the last twenty years had Cassy been told, as she was now, as she afterwards expressed it, "ter tote out de har-kivered trunk. I knowed zac'ly what's gwine on, dat she gwine way som'ers, but I's jes' ter keep my mouf shet an' say nuffin' ter no one. Dem's one o' de times when yer ain't gwine git nuffin' outen 'er ef yer talks from de crack o' day twill day agin.' Yer mout ez well 'tempt ter git water outen de rock."

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

“I SAY, Helen,” said Tom excitedly, one day when he met her on the stairs, “there’s the queerest kind of an old codger asking for you down below. Do see what’s wanted before mother or Adele come along, or there’ll be the deuce to pay, of some kind.”

“What do you mean, Tom?” she asked. But before he could say anything more, James came to her and told her there was some one down stairs who wanted to see her, but who would give no name.

She went down wondering who it could be. She looked in the parlor, but there was no one there, and then went across the hall to a small reception room. In another moment, she had thrown her arms about her visitor, and was saying, excitedly :

“Oh, Aunt Han, Aunt Han, how did you get here?”

“There, child, you know I do not like such demonstrations. You will mash my best bonnet that I’ve worn for ten years.”

“I can’t help it, auntie. I am so glad to see you.”

“Then show it in some other way.”

“Won’t you come up in my room and take your things off, when we can have a good long talk; I have so many things to say to you. I thought you never went

away from home, Aunt Han. Do tell me what message John sent me, please."

"What business was it of John Carter's, I'd like to know, my coming away? I could not be burdened with messages."

"You mean that John did not know you were coming?" asked Helen, in some surprise; and then to her further surprise she was informed that her aunt had arrived the day before, and that she had come now for her to go out with her.

"You can't expect me, after not having been here for fifteen years, to know my way about, and who should I call on to go with me, if not my very own niece?"

"Of course you should, and I shall be so glad to go with you. Where shall we go, and what would you like to see?"

Without answering, she asked abruptly:

"Who was that boy I met as I came in?"

"Tom, I guess, Aunt Han."

"One of Howard Carter's children? Well, if they are all like that, I am sorry for him."

"I hope he was not rude in any way, auntie," said Helen, remembering what Tom had said to her before she came down.

"Rude! Rude! When I was young, I was taught it was the height of rudeness to stare at people as though they were wild animals." And in a dissatisfied tone, she told Helen to hurry and put on her things and not keep her waiting there any longer.

Helen stopped on her way to speak to Tom.

"She is my aunt," she said simply, "and I am sorry you spoke as you did."

"Your —— your aunt!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes; my great-aunt, and she has come all the way from my own home."

"Well, she is kind of queer looking; but if she is your aunt, I am sorry I said it; but, I say," he added, with a confidential shake of the head, "I'd try to manage it so mother and Adele should not see her here."

"Why, Tom?" asked Helen, in some surprise.

"Because—— because, they might say or do something they would be sorry for, as I did."

Helen wondered, while she dressed herself, why Tom should have said that. Did they not have people as old as her aunt in New York? Did not people live so long there? Was that the reason? No, for Mrs. Duncan was as old; but then, she and Aunt Han were so very different. Were all the others different in the same way?

To her surprise, her aunt expressed a wish to see some of the large stores, the ones where her aunt and Adele bought their fine clothes.

"I might as well see the fine things that other people wear, now I am here," she said. And Helen, wondering somewhat at her taste, when there were so many other things to see, but anxious to please her, took her into the crowded thoroughfares, where they jostled against fashionable women enveloped in velvets and furs. Catching Helen by the arm, when she was about to enter one

of New York's largest establishments, and drawing her into a quiet corner, she said :

"That place is full of pickpockets. I know it is. Can't you hide this somewhere?" And she thrust into her hand a well-filled purse. "It's been burning a hole in my pocket ever since I started from home. Goodness, child," she said, as Helen looked at her, wonderingly, "You don't suppose all that belongs to me! When have I ever had so much money as that since the surrender? Then, hurry and buy your dress before you lose it."

Helen was bewildered. Where did the money come from, and what did it all mean ?

"Come," said the old lady, "I'm getting tired; but I am bound to see that dress bought before I leave you. Your aunt may get ahead of you."

"Where did the money come from?" asked Helen.

"It was honestly made. That is all that it is necessary for you to know. No; John had nothing to do with it," she said, sharply.

"Did it come from the same place as the other?" asked Helen.

"Maybe so, and maybe not"

That was all Helen could find out, and she was obliged to be content. It was a pleasure, though, to feel that she could select her own dress, and she took so much interest in doing it that she did not notice the curious looks that were thrown on her companion, as they stood together, turning over handsome silks. It was not often that an old lady of her "get-up" was seen at that coun-

ter. After selecting a cream-colored surah, as the dress that would at the same time suit her aunt and herself, Helen looked for a few little things to go with it; and then her aunt said, thoughtfully, and as though half to herself:

“Seeing so much makes me feel like getting something for myself. Seems as though I ought to have something from New York, if I only had the money.”

“What would you get, if you could, auntie?” asked Helen.

“I suppose I might buy myself a new cap, child. Yes; I suppose the style has changed some since I was here before, and I don’t know but I *would* like a new one. But, there isn’t any use in wishing for what you can’t have, you know.”

“Suppose you could have this, though,” said Helen, excitedly. “Oh, auntie, I know where Mrs. Duncan gets hers, and she does have the loveliest ones I ever saw. Come, let’s go, and see what we can find.”

“No; seeing is desiring. Haven’t you found that out, child?”

Helen insisted, however, and persuaded her aunt that there was no reason why she should not let her buy a cap for her.

“You know, auntie, I would not be happy to spend all this money on myself, and would so love to do that for you.”

“Well, as long as it’s not my own money that has to pay for it, I shall get a pretty fine one. For once, since

the surrender, I shan't stop to think of the cost." Nor did she; and though it took what Aunt Han called "a pretty stiff" sum to pay for it, it gave Helen pleasure to think she had been able to do it.

"Don't you think you would have done better to put that money in some fandangles for yourself?" asked the old lady. "I don't see you with a lot of furry stuff round your neck and hands like other girls. It looks so comfortable and nice."

"They can afford it, auntie, and you know I can't."

"They can, can they? Well, you said your uncle offered you an allowance. Why didn't you take it and dress like others, child, when you had a chance?"

"Because I do not want to pretend to be what I am not; and I don't think John would like it, either."

They had been standing apart talking while the cap was being done up, for Aunt Han insisted on taking it with her. As they were leaving the store, Helen, in turning her head, saw Adele coming toward them.

"Wait a moment, auntie," she said, laying a hand on her arm. "Here comes my cousin, and I would like to introduce you to her."

Adele had seen Helen and her action, and with a rude stare at her companion, had looked Helen herself squarely in the face, and, without a sign of recognition, had passed on, with her head proudly held up in the air. Mr. Edmands, walking directly behind her, had seen the whole thing, and he saw, too, the red color mount to Helen's face, and her eyes flash as she moved a step

closer to her companion. A moment later she was acknowledging his bow; but instead of the bright look on her face that he was accustomed to see, there was a troubled one.

“Where is your cousin?” asked Aunt Han, impatiently.

“She——, she has gone on. She did not stop,” said Helen, confusedly.

“Was she the girl in green, who stared so?”

“Don’t think hard of her for that,” said Helen, trying not to show what she felt herself.

“She would not have done it, child, if you had been with some one in silks and velvets.”

Helen knew that her aunt looked a little odd in her big black bonnet and wide, old-fashioned figured veil; but she had no idea that clothes actually counted for so much with any one, and it gave her a feeling of mortification to think that Adele, her own cousin, should behave as she had done.

“Who spoke to you after she passed?” asked her aunt.

“Mr. Edmands.”

“Why in the world are we standing here to be stared at?” said Aunt Han, with more than usual sharpness. “It is time I was getting something to eat. You can tell Howard Carter from me that his children’s manners do him credit. Now you go your way, and I’ll go mine.”

“But, Aunt Han——,” began Helen.

“There, child, I’ve had enough of you now. Never

mind where I'm staying. I'm not going to have you running in on me at all hours. When I want you, I'll send for you."

"You'll come to see me, then. I have not heard half I want to about John and Maud. You'll——" Here she remembered how both Tom and Adele had acted, and what Tom had said, and she hesitated.

"I am not going to enter the doors of Howard Carter's house again. You may enjoy being there, but I don't." And before Helen could find out anything more, or knew if she was to see her aunt again, she had gone.

CHAPTER XII.

A LOSS OF TEMPER.

“ WHERE in the world did you pick up that queer-looking creature you were with this morning ? ” asked Adele, just before luncheon, having hunted Helen up for the purpose of interviewing her on the subject.

“ That was my aunt , ” said Helen, looking her steadily in the eyes.

“ Your aunt ! ” exclaimed Adele, with a look of horror.

“ Yes ; she arrived yesterday, and came this morning to—— ”

“ Came here, to this house ! Who let her in ? ”

“ Be quiet, Adele , ” said Tom, who was present. “ You have no right to speak so to Helen of her aunt . ”

“ I have a right ; for I have no intention of having my friends meet such odd-looking characters here. She looked as though she might have been alive when Noah came out of the ark, judging by her clothes . ”

Helen’s temper here got the better of her, and, with flashing eyes, she said, quickly :

“ There is no danger of your ever entertaining an angel unawares. Aunt Han’s clothes may be old-fashioned, but she has done more good in this world than you are ever likely to do . ”

"That's all bosh," said Adele. "Do you know that Mr. Edmands was right behind me, when I met you? I think he must have been rather horrified; for I am sure he meant to join me."

"I do know that he was behind you," said Helen, "and that he behaved more like a gentleman than you did like a lady."

"Possibly he did not know that creature was with you. I hope and trust he did not."

"But he did, and I—" began Helen, when Bessie came into the room, and she stopped at once, feeling that a discussion of this kind must not be carried on before her. At the same time she realized how far she herself had gone, and, escaping quickly to her own room, she threw herself on the bed, and burst into a flood of tears. At luncheon she was missing, and when Mr. Carter inquired for her, Tom at once excused her, but for some reason the meal was not so pleasant as usual. Was it entirely because the bright, happy face was absent? Mr. Carter thought so, for he had grown very fond of seeing it at his table, and of hearing the pleasant voice. Why was his own daughter so different? he wondered. He was unusually quiet, until a note was handed his wife, and he had watched her as she read it.

"Well?" he asked, as he saw a puzzled look on her face.

"I don't quite understand," she said. "It is from Mrs. Duncan, and it is the second I have had to-day. The first asked if I would allow Helen to dine with her

this evening. I had already formed plans for her, and begged that she would excuse her. Now, here comes another, saying, if it is possible, will I reconsider the matter, with the information that Helen's aunt is with her, and she would like to give her a little surprise and pleasure, at the same time. I did not know she had an aunt here. I don't quite understand it."

Mr. Carter caught the look that passed between Tom and Adele, and seeing that they knew something more than his wife did, questioned them so closely and severely that he learned the whole story of Aunt Han's arrival, and of the meeting on the street.

"I can't imagine the elegant Mrs. Duncan entertaining such a guy," said Adele. "It must be some one else."

"Some day I trust you will learn to think less of clothes and more of soul," said her father, in a tone she could not quite understand. "Mrs. Duncan can recognize true worth beneath a rough exterior. I shall take your mother to call on the 'guy' to-night, and when she comes here to stay, as I certainly hope she will, she shall be treated with as much respect as though she were clothed in velvet and covered with diamonds."

"Father!" exclaimed Adele, who had been utterly dismayed by his remark. "You do not mean to have that person here. You do not know; you have not seen her."

"I do know, for I *have* seen her," he said, eying his daughter sharply. "I have seen her take the bread

from her own mouth, and give it to another who was starving, taking him also into her house, and nursing him from death to life. Of her it will be said : 'I was sick, and in prison, and ye visited me !' That prisoner was your father, Adele. He was dying in a strange land, and she found him and ministered to him, when he had helped to reduce her from wealth to poverty. It was one of those war incidents of which the country was full at one time, but of which little was known at the time. She was a perfect stranger to me then, for she did not move to North Carolina till after the war, when her home in Georgia was broken up. She is the woman at whom my children have sneered to-day, and yet there was a time when her beauty was far-famed, and brought scores of suitors to her feet. You laugh at her appearance now, but it was her beauty once that caused her the greatest trouble of her life. Your friend, Mr. Edmands, you say, saw her. Did he, too, 'pass by on the other side' ? If so, he deserves the severest censure ; for it was one of his name who blighted her life, causing her to say, when he left her, in a fit of jealousy that well-nigh turned his brain, that no man should ever again call her beautiful. She is the woman you call a 'guy.' I am going to Helen now, and I trust you will have the good sense to apologize yourself immediately."

Adele had never heard her father speak in this way before, and when he had left the room, she looked at her mother in a bewildered way.

" You had better do as your father suggests," said her

mother "and make the best of it now. If Mrs. Duncan entertains her, surely we can."

"But she won't meet any one there, mother, and there is no knowing whom she might meet here."

"I cannot help it," said Mrs. Carter. "When your father makes up his mind in that way, you know there is no use in arguing. I wish it had happened any day but to-day, for I did want Helen to-night."

Mrs. Carter had found her niece useful to her in many ways, and she did not like to have her away from her when she particularly wanted her. There were a thousand and one little things that she found Helen could do for her about the house, about her own person when she was going out at night, and in the way of entertaining, that were particularly acceptable. A few touches of hers to the flowers on the dinner table, or about the house, would give them an easy, natural look, which they did not have before. The little country girl from the South could give them a careless look that was very fascinating. Then, too, there were certain people who came to the house whom Mrs. Carter could only entertain with difficulty. They were not her "style," but Helen seemed to find no trouble in interesting them, and it was a relief to Mrs. Carter to have her present when they were. She saw, too, that Helen attracted attention where she went by the very simplicity and unconsciousness of her manners, and she rather enjoyed taking her about, and felt that nothing must be done to frighten her, or send her home before the season was over.

"Perhaps I had better go to Helen," she said, when her husband had been gone some time. "I think possibly I might make her understand your mistake better than your father or you."

"No; I will go myself," said Adele, a little impatiently. "I am the culprit, if there is one, and father will not be satisfied until I do, though what I am to say I don't know; for all I did say was true, and she got in a towering rage herself. Tom thinks her pretty near perfection, but that don't look much like it."

"If it had been herself you had spoken of and treated so, she would not have said what she did," said Tom; "but she could not stand it for another, and I don't blame her, either. She is as true as steel, and will stand by a friend to the bitter end. I'm ashamed of myself for what I said, and I wish I'd cut my tongue out first, for she is just the kind of girl a fellow ought to be proud to stand up for."

When Mr. Carter reached Helen's room, he found her just coming out. Her eyes showed that she had been crying, but she was perfectly composed, as she said:

"Oh, uncle, I was just going to Adele to tell her how sorry I am. I lost my temper, and spoke to her, a little while ago, as I should not have done."

Mr. Carter drew her back in the room, and told her it was Adele who should come to her.

"No, uncle," said Helen. "I had no right to lose my temper as I did. The trouble is I do not understand some things just as Adele looks at them; but I had no right

to speak as I did, and I shall not be satisfied until I can beg Adele's pardon. Auntie did look odd to her, I suppose, and——”

Here Mr. Carter stopped her, and told her things of her aunt she did not know herself.

“I have always known,” she said, “that auntie did not let her left hand know what was done by her right, and it is so pleasant to have you tell me this, and to know that you appreciate her too.”

There was an earnest talk for some time, and then Helen insisted upon going to Adele and apologizing for the words she had used. There were two apologies, but Helen's was the more sincere; and before she went to Mrs. Duncan's she took into her cousin's room a flower she had been guarding and tending carefully for some time. Adele had admired it; and, though she knew she should miss it, she was glad to prove to Adele that she had none but kind feelings, and that the unfortunate events of that day were to be as though they had never been, so far as she was concerned.

CHAPTER XIII.

SMALL BEGINNINGS.

IT was a great surprise to Helen to find her aunt at Mrs. Duncan's, and to be told that they had known each other as girls.

"How very pretty you look!" she said, with sparkling eyes. "I wish John could see you to-night. Why, auntie, I never knew before how handsome you were."

She did look handsome, wearing the new cap and a black silk dress, which, though old-fashioned in its make, was so relieved by delicate lace at the throat and wrists, as to give her a quaint, picturesque appearance.

"Pretty is as pretty does, child," said the old lady. "Never wish to be beautiful, but rather thank God you were not born so."

She spoke sharply, and Helen, not knowing the sorrow her own beauty had caused her, understood it only as her usual manner, and changed the subject. If she had been surprised to see her aunt, she was still more surprised, after dinner, when Mr. and Mrs. Carter came to call on her, followed in a little while by Mr. Edmands. It pleased her very much to have them come; and, when Mrs. Carter invited Aunt Han to come at once to their house and stay, she felt as though she liked them both better than she had done before. What had brought

Mr. Edmands she did not know; but she felt that she liked him, too, better than she had done. It was a very happy time for her, even though her aunt took occasion constantly to say sharp things to her aside. She did not mind them now, and was really disappointed when she found that she was to leave on the following day.

"Why would you have me stay here longer?" she asked. "I came on business; my business is done, and now I must get back where I can live decently, without being stared at and insulted; at Christmas time, too! I can't stay here and see money wasted on foolishness. I have none to spend in that way. It's surely ruining the country, child. No; I would never have come here and spent the savings I had put away, if it hadn't been to look after a little bit of money that's been worrying me. It's all gone, and I go back poorer than I came."

"You—— you don't really need anything?" asked Helen, anxiously. She had always believed that her aunt had enough to make her comfortable, by strict economy, but no more. Now, she was fearful lest this loss of which she spoke might cause her to suffer.

"That depends on what you call need. I reckon I won't actually starve just yet, if I can once get home. If I find I need a few dollars—five or ten—to straighten out things when I get back, I suppose John will not let me suffer for want of them."

"Auntie," said Helen, in a half-frightened tone, "let me give you the money. Don't go to John, please; let me do it."

"And where will you get it, pray?"

"Why, did you not hand me a whole purse-full of it?"

"And how will you get the rest of your fine fixings without it?"

"I don't want any fine fixings at all while you need anything."

"Then I'll know where to come."

"Let me give it to you now, please."

"And bother myself with it all the way home for fear I'll lose it."

"You'll promise me not to go to John for it?"

"Unless you send it before I want it. Just lay aside ten dollars for a couple of weeks, but I won't be bothered with it till I want it. If you do send it, I'll go to John for the same amount. Do you understand?"

"Yes, but I wish you would just let me give it to you now."

"I tell you I won't be bothered with it, and that settles it. If I don't send for it in two weeks, you can buy some kind of jim-cracks with it. If you think you have anything to spare now, you can let me have a dollar bill till I can pay you, to get my meals going home."

Gladly did Helen give her the money, and just as gladly did she give the same amount the following day to her uncle, to be used for the family of one of his employees. At luncheon he had spoken of having gone to see the man, who had been injured and sent to the hospital. He told a sorrowful tale of a family of young

children, who just at Christmas time were left without his support.

“Let me go to see the children?” Helen asked when they rose from the table, and she thought herself alone with her uncle.

“Not to-day. I am going myself, and perhaps will take you another time. It is in a very rough part of the city, and I think I had better go alone first.”

“Then take this please, and use it as you think best,” she said, handing him a dollar. He looked at her a moment, and then took the money without a word.

“I say!” said Tom. “I don’t think you ought to have given all that.”

“Oh, Tom, I didn’t know you were here!”

“But I am, and I saw what you did just now. It’s more than Adele would do, and she is a thousand times better able to do it than you.”

“Don’t talk in that way, Tom. You have no right to speak so of Adele. You don’t know what she would do.”

“Yes I do; for I know how she growls over the ten cents she puts in the collection every Sunday. I suppose you would do something for another poor family, if you knew of them.”

“Tom,” said Helen, seriously, “I don’t like to hear you speak so. It should be a pleasure to us to give a portion of what God has given us to his poor. You know where it says, ‘Freely ye have received, freely give.’ God has been very good to me lately. Surely you would not have me begrudge the little I can do for him.”

"Well, it may be all right; but when I see some people with lots of money afraid to pay out a little in that way, it seems as though you must be robbing yourself."

"Why, Tom, don't you know the Jews in olden times were expected to give a tenth of everything to the Lord? Try giving something yourself, and see what a pleasure it is."

"But you see I would not be giving my own, for I have to go to father for everything I want. I wish I had an allowance."

"I have no doubt your father would give you one if you asked him."

"I've a notion to do it this very night, Helen. I haven't thought of it since I had that other talk with him."

He did speak to his father, who commenced his allowance at once; and on Christmas morning Helen received a very beautiful set of furs from "Uncle Howard and Tom."

"You see," said Tom, afterward, "father suggested that we should give you something together. We would never have thought of doing anything together till you came, and he thought you might understand and appreciate. I suggested the furs, because I knew you had none, and because I was sure there was any amount of cold weather coming. It seemed rather appropriate, you know. You had ministered to our minds, and we could minister to your body."

It was a boy's way of putting it, but it made Helen

very happy. Indeed, it was a happy day altogether. A long letter came from John, and one from Maud, both of which brought tears of joy to her eyes. John's was such a dear, helpful letter ; and Maud's, though much shorter, told her the girl was trying to do as she would have her.

"John and I talk about you lots," she said. "We both miss you so very much ; but John says the little white fairies bring such sweet messages, that it helps to make up for your being away. He has been so nice to me since you left, he has almost made me forget he is not my brother as well as yours. He is so good when I try to fix nice things for him to eat. They are never as nice as yours, but he won't say so ; and when he found me crying the other night, because I had spoiled something I was trying to make for supper, he sat right down and told me how you had spoiled a whole dinner once, when he had brought home company, and the cook had gone away sick. He made me laugh by the funny way he told it, and then of course, I did not mind so much. If I could do things better, I would really like to do them."

This letter touched Helen particularly, for it showed that Maud was really and earnestly trying to take her place, as she had asked. She believed there were great possibilities in her nature, and felt that she might become a fine woman, if she would.

Another pleasant surprise came to Helen that day from Mrs. Duncan. It was the dress that had belonged to her great-grandmother, together with various little things

that had also belonged to her, and a hanging basket of flowers for her room, from Mr. Duncan.

"We must put that in the sitting room," she said.

"No, that was intended for you," said Tom, who had witnessed the opening of the things.

"I am afraid there is not enough sunshine there for it. You know flowers love the light, and they repay us for giving it to them by growing beautiful and looking happy in it."

"Not all."

"No, they are just like people. There are some retiring, modest ones, whom God has fitted for the shady corners of life, and many of them grow very beautiful and lovely there, but the most of us need part sunshine and part shadow; and the lights and shadows are ever changing, never more of either than we can bear. Did you ever stop to think, Tom, that of all the lives that have ever been lived, no two have been exactly alike? God's possibilities are infinite, and ours—— Do you know I sometimes wonder how we can expect anything of the future, when we do so neglect the magnificent opportunities of the present. It is what we do and say now, at the present time, that not only influences our future, but that of others.

"I wish I knew how to live just as God would wish," said Bessie.

"You have commenced already, dear, by wishing it."

"But I am so little. I can't do things as you and Tom can."

"God never puts anything on this earth, dear, without something for it to do. I remember once going with John to see a poor woman whose husband and three children had all died within a week. She had a little baby left, and she said that had kept her from losing her mind; so you see we can never be too young to be of some use. We can begin by being home brighteners."

"That's what you are, Cousin Helen. Everybody loves to have you about."

"And does my little cousin not know that the home is very much brighter to Tom and me for having her in it?"

"But, Cousin Helen, that's you. You are so, so sweet, I can't help loving you and wanting you all the time; and Tom, why I love Tom better than any one else in the world. So I can't help it, you know. That isn't anything."

"How about the other people in the house?"

"Oh, I can't do anything for them. Adele scolds if I go near her room, and mamma says she can't bear to have children always under her feet, and papa don't care at all."

"I think you have made one little mistake; for I heard papa say the other morning when you were tired, and not down to breakfast, that he wished he had time to go to your room and speak to you, because it never seemed as though the day had begun right if he did not see your face somewhere before he went out."

"Did papa really say that?" asked the child, in some surprise. "Why, he never says much at breakfast, and I

thought he didn't care if anybody was there or not. I wasn't even really tired that morning, either, only lazy, and I thought I would do as Adele does, and try lying in bed ; but I'll never do it again, now, and I am so glad you told me. I can begin with papa, and try to make him like me more. It will be easier now I know he cares."

"But God gives us hard things to do as well as easy ones, Bessie. He will make the hard things easy, just as he made it easy for Tom, after he made up his mind to go to his father. We must be ready, like soldiers in battle, to face trouble and defeat bravely, if we do not conquer at first."

"You mean I ought to try and make mamma and Adele—oh, Cousin Helen, I couldn't," the child almost sobbed.

"Not alone, but there is such a dear, good Friend who will help you."

"How can I begin? There isn't anything I can do."

"You will find an opportunity before you think, perhaps ; and then, ' Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'"

An opportunity occurred before the day was over for Bessie to act. Her mother had given her maid a half-holiday, and was bewailing the necessity for it when she wanted some things brought from her room. She had asked Helen to get them, when Bessie spoke quickly and said :

"Let me get them, please, mamma."

"No, you couldn't find them," said Mrs. Carter, in a not very gracious tone.

"Try me, please," said Bessie, pleasantly; and as her mother did not say no, and Helen smiled, she went off, only to return in a few moments with all the things she had gone for, and in addition Mrs. Carter found, when taking them, a very beautiful Marechal Neil rose.

"This is something my maid does not treat me to," she said, in some surprise. "Where did it come from?"

"I raised it myself, mamma; but it is yours now."

"It is very thoughtful of you to give it to me," said Mrs. Carter, and Bessie was happy. But before the day was over, she found the rose on the floor, crushed and withered.

"It was worth the loss of the rose, dear, to make the beginning," said Helen, who saw it too, and put her arms lovingly about the child.

"Cousin Helen, I have watched and loved that rose so long."

"God knows, Bessie; and some day you may realize how he has given it back to you in another form. Who knows but it may have done much more for you to-day than anything else you could possibly have done?"

"If I thought she really cared."

"There is never a kind, thoughtful word or deed that is lost, Bessie. God gives the very smallest of them such power to grow and beautify the world, that only those can know and understand who have passed through the golden gates and entered the glorious hereafter. All he

asks from us is to do the best we know how. He does all the rest. Somehow your rose there reminds me of the bloom of our beautiful Southern plant, the cotton. After weeks and weeks of care and watchful attention, it shows itself in all its beauty, a most delicate, cream-colored flower that one loves to gaze on ; but only for a day does its beauty last. We wake up the second morning, and it is a dull, purplish-red, and soon it is withered and gone. So are many little unselfish acts of life. They are quickly over and forgotten, but there is a something left behind that God himself cares for. In the case of the cotton bloom, it is a tiny, little green knob that grows and grows until it bursts and overflows, and the fields are covered with the beautiful white, feathery balls. But even that is not the end of it, for these beautiful white balls are gathered together, and in time we, as well as people everywhere, are clothed and kept warm by them. God's surprises are many, Bessie, and often bring to our minds a little word or deed we had not thought much of before. Suppose we keep the rose and press it. It may have done its work in a way we don't know of now."

"Please find that verse, Cousin Helen, in my Bible, and put it there, the one about doing things with your might. I would like to learn it. Repeat it, please."

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," said Helen, handling the rose very tenderly.

CHAPTER XIV.

CENTENNIAL GHOSTS.

“WHAT do you think I have here ?” cried Adele, opening the door of a small room that she called her own private sitting room, which was now occupied by Helen and Adele’s Boston friend, Margaret Parker. She flourished before her, as she spoke, three envelopes.

“Don’t dare keep us in suspense,” said Margaret, shaking her head ominously.

“I can’t do it. I must tell you. They are invitations to a Centennial Tea-party. Isn’t it lovely? We are all expected to dress in costumes of a hundred years ago; and they are so becoming and picturesque. See, the invitations are gotten up in ‘ye olden style.’”

“How can we see, if you keep them all to yourself?” said Margaret.

“Who sent them?” asked Helen.

“Mrs. Duncan,” said Adele, handing each of the girls an envelope, “and I believe it was sending that dress to you at Christmas that put the notion in her head. How lovely that you have it to wear!”

“Wear that dress!” said Helen, quickly. “No, I couldn’t do it.”

"Why, Helen, what do you mean? Why can't you do it?" asked Adele, irritably.

"I should be afraid of ghosts," was the reply.

"How fearfully absurd!" said Adele. "I did not think that you, Helen Carter, with all your pretensions, were afraid of ghosts. Pray, what kind do you fear?"

"In this instance, Centennial ghosts," was the quick reply; "but Adele, you do not understand. The dress was worn by my great-grandmother, at a time when she proved herself a true heroine. She was one of those grand women whose deeds have become historic, and who have put to shame those who would have crushed them. Let me tell you my grandmother's story some time, and then you will understand."

"Tell it now," said Margaret. "I always enjoy hearing of the lives of one's ancestry."

"No, I have promised to tell it to Tom and Bessie; so some time when we can all be together, and can imagine ourselves back in 'ye olden times,' I will tell it." It was in these little quiet ways that Helen tried to bring Adele and her brother and sister together, by giving them some common interest.

"What will Mrs. Duncan say, if you do not wear the dress after she has sent it? She intended that, of course."

"I hope not," said Helen, quickly; "but if you think so, I will go to her to-day and see."

"How can I help thinking so, when she first sent the dress, and then invited you there, as she has done? You'll find, Margaret," she said, addressing her visitor,

"that Helen is inclined to live on the dark side of life."

"Why, Adele," said Margaret, in some surprise, "I don't see how you can say so. I have been envying her, since I have been here, the power of finding something bright in everything. She always seems so happy and cheerful, that it is quite infectious, *I* think."

Helen gave her a quick, pleased look, as Adele said :

"Oh, Helen is bright enough herself, but I don't see how she can be, when she is always mixing herself up with other people's sorrows and troubles. I really believe she hunts up such things and likes the dark side of life."

"That reminds me of what a dear old Quaker lady said to me once, when I was complaining of there being so much sorrow and trouble in the world. I called it darkness, too; but she said: 'Thee forgets, dear, that the darkness veils the presence of One whom we could not look on and live. When the darkness is greatest, then he is closest. I have seen those who have been in darkness, and who have come out with their faces glorified, as though they, like Moses, had been able to catch a glimpse of the glories behind the veil, and the reflection was still showing. My dear, we must all have some of the darkness in our own lives, but we should pray for just such faith as will pierce the veil and let the glory in. If thee is ever able to be with those who have done it, deem it a great privilege; for thee may be able to

catch a little of the reflection too, and thy life will be the better for it.' It seems to me I can remember every word she said, for it made an impression on me I do not think I shall ever forget."

"*Et tu Brute?*" said Adele, with a despairing shake of the head. "Do you mean to tell me, Margaret Parker, that you have grown goody-goody, too?"

"Adele, I am not half as good as I would like to be, but since I have been looking into the lives of other good people, I have grown to envy some of them, or rather to wish I, too, could feel as they do. Perhaps Helen feels very much in the same way, though she may have tested the matter more than I. If you——"

"There, that's enough. If you are going to preach I shall leave. I suppose you will tell me next that you have given up dancing. I have heard sermons enough on that point. I am sure, though, I can't see where the sin comes in."

"I did not, either," said Margaret; "but the same dear old Quaker lady told me she often found that the feet accustomed to much dancing grew too weary to go on God's errands of mercy."

"Well, if so-called Christians had control of the world, there would not be much pleasure in it," said Adele.

"I wish you could hear John talk on that subject," said Helen. "He says the world is full of pleasures we don't yet appreciate; but of those we do, there are more than we can take in in a lifetime, if we will. He says

we long too eagerly for the big pleasures that are often disappointing, and neglect the small ones that are to be found all about us. He finds them everywhere, and I think Mrs. Duncan does too. I wish you could meet her, Margaret. Suppose you and Adele come around there with me now, and we will ask her about the dress."

"Thank you, no," said Adele, "I have had enough good talk for one day. You can go, Margaret, if you would like, and I will look up a costume for the tea-party. I'm not afraid of ghosts."

"Do come," said Helen to Margaret. "I am sure you will like Mrs. Duncan, and she loves to have young people come to see her, because she cannot go about herself."

Mrs. Duncan had been suffering that day more than usual, but the sight of two bright young faces brought a pleased look to hers.

"I was just wondering," she said, "what would be the best tonic I could take after my attack, and here comes something better than all the medicinal tonics in the world. My dear," she said, turning to Margaret, "it was very good of you to come to see an old woman like me."

"You must thank Helen for bringing me," she said, smiling.

"Helen knows how I love to have young people about me, and I think she understands something of the pleasures to be derived from the little things of life."

"How odd!" said Margaret. "We were talking of that very thing just before we started." And she gave Helen a quick, pleased look.

"And what were you saying about it, my dear?"

"Helen was saying that we missed so much by neglecting the little pleasures about us."

"She is right there; but I will go farther, and say, that those who neglect the little duties of life sometimes find that they have missed the way to heaven, for the little things of earth are the great things of heaven. It is not the check for thousands, given to a charitable cause, that does the giver so much good in the sight of God, as the food and clothing he gives the poor widow, who comes in his way, and of whom the world knows nothing. You know the value, in the eyes of God, of even a cup of cold water, when given in his name. We should be constantly on the lookout for these little opportunities, for God is ever putting them in our way. I have known people who have asked God to give them something to do for him, expecting some great thing, when they were stumbling over opportunities that lay right in their path. You perhaps think it a small thing that you should give up a little of your time to an old woman like me occasionally; but it is life and health and strength to me to have young people about, and there are thousands like me. A little here, and a little there, and how many sad lives would be brightened."

"Please don't talk in that way about yourself, Mrs. Duncan," said Helen. "You do us more good than we

can possibly do you. It is a privilege to be allowed to come, and I am always the better for it. I had a special purpose in coming to-day, though."

"The purpose?" asked Mrs. Duncan, pleasantly, the interest she felt showing itself in her eyes, that brightened at once. "She was a beautiful old lady," as Margaret afterward expressed it, with her clear complexion and wavy, snow-white hair. Her dress was always black silk, with delicate lace at throat and wrists. That at the throat was caught by an exquisite miniature pin. "My husband's wedding present, many years ago," she had once told Helen. "It was a likeness of him then, and I like to look at it now and go over those happy times in my thoughts." Her only other ornaments were worn on the third finger of her left hand, which had grown so thin and delicate that both the wedding ring, and the diamond one that guarded it, were much smaller now than they had originally been.

Helen told her at once just what had brought her there, and gave her reasons for not wishing to wear the dress.

"Afraid of ghosts!" said Mrs. Duncan, laughing. "Well, well, you young people have original ways of putting things that are quite refreshing. It is true, Helen, sending you the dress did suggest the idea of the tea; but only because I thought I would like to see a glimpse of the olden times around me, as my mother used to describe it. I think some of the young people of to-day will look very quaint and picturesque in costumes such

as their great-grandmothers wore. But, my dear, I did not send you that dress for the purpose of having you wear it; nor would I have you do it, now you have told me your feelings, but you will come dressed in the old style?"

"Indeed, I will, if you will let me be just what I am, an ordinary Southern girl. You need not be afraid, either, that there will be anything modern about me, for I love the old style of dress, and have often fixed myself up to amuse the children. I shall enjoy so much doing it now in earnest; for I can be just what I am, and yet imagine myself living a hundred years ago. I do think it will be just lovely."

"And Margaret," asked Mrs. Duncan, "how does she propose to come?"

"I have worn, on several occasions, a very elegant dress that has been in our family many years; but, since I have heard Helen's fear of ghosts, I do not know whether I can do so again. If I don't wear it, I'll just come as a Yankee girl."

"How perfectly delightful that would be!" said Helen, laughing. "I can see you now going up and saying: 'Ev'nin', Mis. Duncan,' and I can follow with my 'howdy.' I shall never forget the first time Tom heard me use that expression; but, then, he is always finding something in my manner or expressions peculiarly Southern, and he enjoys them in his odd way."

"Don't you think you will like Mrs. Duncan?" asked Helen, as the two girls were on their way home.

"Like her!" was the reply. "She's grand. I wish I could think I would be half as interesting when I am her age."

"It is through trials and suffering that she has become what she is, she says. It seems to me when trouble does soften the head and nature, it is very beautiful, and yet we shrink from pain and suffering as though they were curses. When I look at Mrs. Duncan sometimes, and realize that the world is better for her having lived in it, I wonder if it would be possible for any one ever to say that of me. When you know her better you will understand more of the good she does. She cannot go *about* doing it, so she does it in her way at home. She has a young people's Bible reading every Sunday afternoon, and rich or poor are welcome and expected to meet on a common level. Then, one night in every week, is given up to the young men in the employ of her son. One of them is soon to be married, and she has been planning a reception for him at her home. It is unselfish thought for others that prompts the 'little deeds of kindness,' that make this earth so nearly like the heaven above."

CHAPTER XV.

PLEASURE OR DUTY?

“O H, Helen, how lovely you do look !”

It was the night of Mrs. Carter’s reception, and it was Margaret who spoke, as she came into the room, where they had all agreed to meet before going to the long parlor to receive.

“Flatterer !” said Helen, blushing. “I suppose you don’t think that you look well yourself ?”

“I !” said Margaret. “I only look as scores of other girls will ; but there won’t be one like you. You remind me of a princess I once read of in a fairy tale.”

“Do I ?” said Helen, laughing. “Well, a real live fairy godmother gave me my dress, so you see, so far, the fairy part holds good.”

“I shall be looking for the prince to come and carry you off, all the evening.”

“No fear of that,” laughed Helen ; and as she spoke, Adele and her mother entered. Mrs. Carter was dressed in black velvet and diamonds, and Adele in green velvet, with gilt braid and a profusion of tulle. It was a very striking dress, and one of which Adele was very proud. Her neck and arms were bare, save for the jewels they bore, and the long gloves that reached above her elbows.

“I cannot help thinking,” said Mrs. Carter, examining

Helen's dress, "that you will be sorry, before the evening is over, that you did not follow my advice, and have your dress made differently."

"You surely would not have her changed," said Margaret, in surprise.

"A society girl might affect that severe style, and create a sensation; but I would have preferred having Helen dress a little more like others. I am not sure but people will begin to talk of her as 'a poor relation,' and I do not think she will like that."

"It would only be the truth, Aunt Alice," said Helen, earnestly; "and surely you would not have me pretend to be what I am not. You know I have been brought up a little differently from girls 'in society,' and you can hardly expect me to change my nature, and give up my principles just for such a thing as this. I think John would be better satisfied with me as I am than if I had appeared as a thorough society girl, which I am not, and never can be. He says it is the clothing we give the heart, not the body, that matters most. I will try to make myself as agreeable as I know how, and then perhaps people won't think of the dress."

She spoke pleasantly, and as she ended, looked at Margaret, who said, quickly:

"They can't help that; but I predict, with your simple elegance in dress and your ease of manner, that you will attract more attention and admiration than either Adele or myself."

"You forget the pug nose," said Helen, laughing.

"No, I don't forget that; it is the most bewitching suspicion of one I ever saw."

"Here we come, in battle array," said Tom, entering with a large waiter filled with bouquets of handsome flowers. "These are shields sent by gallant knights to protect our fair dames from the deadly weapons of the enemy—Cupid. Halloo! It strikes me I got that a little mixed; perhaps Cupid himself was the messenger. Dear me, the little fellow may be concealed somewhere among these flowers, after all."

"Don't talk such nonsense," said Adele, impatiently. "Put the waiter down, and let me see whom the flowers are from."

"Not so fast, my lady; they are not all yours."

"Let me see them," said Mrs. Carter; and, lifting one from the waiter, she looked at the card, and handing it to Adele, said: 'From Mr. Edmands.'

"This is the one I shall carry," said Adele, with evident pleasure, but a look of some annoyance came into her face when she found that there were two other bouquets from Mr. Edmands, one for Helen and one for Margaret. "We can't all three carry one man's flowers," she said, irritably.

"Certainly not," said Helen, "and we do not intend to, though we appreciate the kindness that prompted the sending of them."

"Here is the one for Helen to carry," said Mrs. Carter, handing her another. "It will give color to her dress, and comes from Mr. Baylor."

Helen had extended her hand, but as soon as she heard the name, she drew it back, saying :

“I would rather not, Aunt Alice.”

“Why, Helen? I am afraid Mr. Baylor will be offended, if you do not,” said Mrs. Carter.

“Then I am very sorry he sent them, for I cannot use them. I do not like him.”

“Why, Helen, he is immensely wealthy.”

“That does not make me like him,” she said, looking at her aunt in a surprised way, “and I certainly am very sorry——”

“Are you?” said Mr. Carter, entering at the moment, and not knowing of what she was talking. “Well, I’m not sorry, for one, that you are here to grace our home on this occasion, and I’m thinking there will be eyes younger than mine that will follow you about to-night. Who knows, but some prince may find in you his princess. He could hardly choose a fairer.”

“Oh, uncle, I did not know that you, too, were a flatterer.”

There was not time to say more, for they were all obliged to go at once to the parlor, where they were to receive the guests, and it seemed to Helen for a time as though she had suddenly been transported to fairy land in earnest. If Mrs. Carter had any doubts of Helen’s reception by her fashionable friends, they were soon set at rest, for her perfectly natural, unaffected Southern manners won her admirers at once. If she herself was unconscious of the fact that she was having more

attention than Adele even, it was because she gave no thought to self. Once she was reminded of it by Mr. Duncan, who said, so low that no one else could hear:

“If John were here to-night, I think he would be very proud of his sister.”

She gave him a pleased, glad look, and a bright color showed itself in her face; but she had not time to say anything, for Mr. Edmands was speaking.

“At last,” he said, “I am able to get in a word. I assure you, Miss Carter, it has grown to be a feat, requiring some skill, to get a few moments of your time. Now that I have the floor, tell me, please, how you enjoy this, your first large affair.”

“Very, very much indeed, so far.”

“And you are ready now to keep the ball rolling, and be at every other affair of the kind this winter?”

“No,” said Helen, quietly.

“Why not keep it up, if you like this one? I am sure you will have many invitations after to-night.”

“I should not care to,” she said, simply.

“Would you mind telling me just why?” asked Mr. Edmands so earnestly that, after looking at him a moment, she said, earnestly too:

“I have been brought up to believe the world is so full of duties that we can only accept such high days and holidays as this occasionally, if we would rightly perform those duties. Christ himself appeared at some of the social gatherings of his time, but his life was so full

of work for others that he could not give up much time to them."

"Thank you," he said, as though she had conferred a favor on him, and immediately changed the conversation; but he remembered it an hour later when he came to her again, and asked her to come with him to an adjoining room.

"You are still enjoying yourself?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," was the reply.

"But if there were anything you could do for another, you would be willing to give it up for a time?"

"What is it?" she asked, quickly divining a purpose in his asking her to leave the room.

"Your uncle," he said, "has fainted, and in falling struck his head. It happened in the dining room, and fortunately the doors had not been thrown open. Dr. Taylor is with him but wants him moved before he makes a thorough investigation. The servants are all so frightened, they can give no help, and no one else knows where to take him."

"Does my aunt know?"

"No, we think it best to keep it from her and her daughter, for the present. Do you object to going in? He is almost unconscious, and will not know you."

"Oh, I must go in," she said, "and I will see that he is taken right to my room, which is the quietest place in the house to-night."

She found Mr. Duncan and the doctor bending over her uncle, and surrounded by a group of terrified

servants. Mr. Duncan looked up as she entered, but she only questioned him by a look.

"The doctor wants him moved at once," he said, rising. "Can you tell us where to take him where he will be quiet?"

"Yes, to my room," and she spoke to one or two of the servants in a way that quieted them, and caused some to leave the room. "I think," she added to Mr. Duncan, "if he is taken up the back way, I can prevent his meeting any one, by going ahead and closing all the doors."

It was not long after that when her uncle was gently laid on her bed, and she was moving about, shading the light from his eyes, and otherwise arranging things more comfortably. When the doctor was ready for his examination, she slipped into an adjoining room; and when it was over, appeared again in a dark, tight-fitting flannel gown that was a complete contrast to her former appearance.

"You're made of the right stuff, Miss Carter, if you change like that," said Dr. Taylor, holding out his hand. "It is not every girl who would leave that gay crowd down stairs, and do as you have done. I think I shall have to make you head nurse."

"Is my uncle seriously ill?" she asked.

"In one sense, no; in another sense, yes," was the reply.

"Would you mind explaining?" said Helen.

"Miss Carter," said the doctor, "your uncle is not alarm-

ingly ill just now. He will be conscious most probably before long, and will be about again in a few days ; but he is breaking down gradually from overwork, and unless he can be persuaded to take a long rest and give up business entirely for some months, I fear for the consequences. You are a sensible girl, and I tell you this, hoping you may be able to help me in urging him to take a rest."

He gave a few instructions after this and then left, saying he would return in a little while and see his patient. Helen saw that her uncle needed nothing then, and turning to Mr. Edmands, urged him to go back to those who would miss him down stairs.

"And you?" he asked, "will not you be missed? Had you not already settled yourself for the night, I should insist on you being the one to return. Remember, this is your first affair of the kind."

"I could not enjoy any more of it now," she said, and then, changing the subject, thanked him for the flowers he had sent.

"I did not know but I had annoyed you by sending them, still I thought you might like to carry some."

"Annoy me!" she said, quickly remembering the day he had spoken to her so pleasantly in the store when her own cousin had passed her by. "I am sorry you thought that."

"Will you tell me then why you did not wear them?" he asked.

"I would rather not," she said, simply.

"Then I shall not ask you farther," he said, thinking

the straightforward objection much more to be admired than an evasive but elaborate excuse.

"You will tell my aunt about uncle?" she said. "It does not seem right to have so much gayety in the house while he lies ill. She will not like it if she is not told."

"Do you think so? I am not sure."

"Oh Mr. Edmands! Suppose—suppose he is worse than the doctor thinks. I am afraid she would never forgive us if we did not tell her."

Before Mr. Edmands could reply, a groan from the sick man caused Helen to bend over him affectionately.

"Where am I?" he asked, in a bewildered tone.

"Here, with Helen," was the quick reply. "Your head hurts, you know, uncle, and you must let me bathe it as I did once before."

"Yes, yes, it hurts, and they tell me I must have rest. What was that the minister said of rest last Sunday? It's been running through my head all the time, and now it's gone."

"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," she repeated slowly.

"Yes, yes, that's it. I can sleep again now you've found it for me; but you must keep your hand on my head. You're a good girl, and it rests me to have you near."

Down stairs the scene had changed when Mr. Edmands returned. On the very spot where the master of the house had lain so short a time before, busy feet were now

hurrying to and fro, while the room was full of the sound of many voices, as the good things so generously provided were being rapidly disposed of.

“ Halloo, Edmands! ” said one friend whom he passed on his tour through the rooms in search of Mrs. Carter, “ you look as though you had been listening to a sermon.”

“ I have,” was the reply, as he moved on.

He found Mrs. Carter at last, and drawing her aside, told her what he thought she ought to know of her husband’s condition. He was surprised to find how quietly she took it, while thanking him most profusely for his attentions.

“ I will go up and see him in a few moments,” she said, “ but I know very well what it is. He had just such a turn once before, and fainted from the intensity of the pain in his head. I was alarmed then, but a complete rest soon set him all right. I will send one of the servants to him, and they can let me know if he wants anything.”

“ Mr. Duncan and Miss Helen are with him.”

“ Helen! Helen! and I have been sending everywhere for her. Several persons have inquired for her. I must send for her at once.”

“ She will not come,” was the reply. “ She has constituted herself head nurse for the night.”

“ I must stop that,” said Mrs. Carter. “ She will not be fit for anything to-morrow night, and Mrs. Gordon insists on my bringing her to a musicale she is to give.”

"Miss Carter," said Mr. Edmands, later in the evening to Adele, "do you make a success of everything as you have done of this evening? I hear but one expression on every side, and that complimentary to you and your mother for your taste in all the arrangements."

"I am so glad you like it all," said Adele, who knew that the something that had given a look to the rooms, different from that seen on similar occasions elsewhere, had been due to Helen's taste entirely.

"How about success elsewhere?" he asked.

"You mean with the Southern girl?" she asked, looking at him out of the corners of her eyes.

"Yes, you know I said I should want to note progress."

"She's the very queerest combination I ever came across," said Adele, decidedly. "I have been wondering to-night what there can be so attractive about her, and I am half inclined to think her a studied flirt, after all."

"What has brought you to that decision?" asked her companion.

"One thing, was a conversation I overheard between her and one of the richest men in the room. It was either intensely rude, or intended as a bait. I will let you judge for yourself."

"Miss Carter would hardly thank us for passing judgment on her from a conversation that had been overheard."

"Oh, that isn't anything; and indeed you must listen, for it was too funny."

Before he could make further excuses, she was telling him the story.

“She received a very handsome bouquet,” she said, “which mother was anxious she should carry, knowing it would be well for her to encourage the attentions of so wealthy a man; but imagine her, a girl without a cent in the world, expressing regret—as he stood before her, his diamond studs sparkling, and he himself able to give her anything in the world she wanted, that he had sent her a few flowers, and hoping such a thing would not happen again. I imagine he was rather taken aback, for he asked the cause of her displeasure; and she replied, that his cynical, sneering remarks at their last interview, on subjects that were sacred in her eyes, had convinced her that they could never be friends; she could not endure meeting and conversing with a man who talked as he did. If any girl said such a thing to you, would you not consider her very rude, Mr. Edmands?”

“It would depend largely on what I saw in her face as she said it,” was the reply. “There are times when such words can do a man good.”

“Well, he has asked for Helen twice since. You men are very hard to understand,” she said, half burying her face in her own bouquet.

When Mr. Edmands went again to the room where Mr. Carter lay ill, he was followed by a tall waiter, carrying a tray of eatables.

“I cannot eat anything,” said Helen, when told that the things were for her and Mr. Duncan.

“ You forget that you may need all your strength in the next few days, and you must take care of it, and do everything to keep it up. Besides, Mr. Duncan has had nothing, and I think he would enjoy eating more, if he had some one with him. I will watch your uncle.”

“ You are right,” she said. “ We must not let Mr. Duncan suffer. Aunt Alice does not think there is much the matter with uncle; but I am sure the doctor is more anxious than he was at first.”

CHAPTER XVI.

MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER.

IT was several days before Helen thought she could leave her uncle for any length of time, for he seemed to want her by him all the time, and was in fact more seriously ill than had been at first supposed. Mrs. Carter insisted always that there was very little the matter, and not only would not give up any engagements of her own, but was annoyed at Helen's reluctance to going about as usual. Adele "hated sick rooms," and would scarcely enter that of her father. It was Helen who was ever ready with a bright smile and pleasant word when he roused, and she found her way into a warm corner of his heart during this time. Bessie would steal in softly at times, and quietly lay her young, fresh face by the side of her father's, all seamed and wrinkled with care, and there were times when the three had talks that were never forgotten by either of them.

"Papa," said Bessie, one day, "I wonder if I can ever be half the help to any one that Cousin Helen is? She makes people happy, everywhere, and she makes you want to be good, not because you ought to be, but because you want to please God. I never wanted to be good in the same way before, but now it seems queer that everybody does not look at it as Cousin Helen

does. I used to think God was so far off it tired me to think of it ; but now it is so sweet to feel that he is around about us all the time, and never leaves us. Don't you think we ought to be ashamed to think anything we would not like him to know ? Tom says it is almost as bad to think wrong as to do it, only it is not so bad for others then as for ourselves. Do you know, papa, I never loved you half so well as I have done since I loved God more."

Mr. Carter thought this last was due partly to himself, but he did not say so at the time ; for he knew that the change was due to the quiet influence of the girl who had entered his home so short a time before, and who, in her simplicity, never dreamed of the great work she was doing. Tom came every evening to his father, and as he grew stronger, entertained him with bits of the outside world calculated to interest him. He never stayed long at a time, but the visits were appreciated ; and one night he came, and in his abrupt way, informed his father that it was a capital time for a ghost story, and if he'd let him help him to the sitting room, he'd find a big easy chair waiting for him, and it was more than likely that Helen would "bring out her ghost."

Mr. Carter listened with interest. To think that Tom should plan for him in this way ! He had not yet left his room, as the doctor said he must still keep away from any care or annoyance, but this—this was a delightful change, and would be a rest in itself. Helen was delighted to see the pleased look on his face, and rose at

once to render what assistance she might be able to give. Mr. Carter was still weak, and was glad of Tom's support; but when the sitting-room door was opened, and a deep voice drawled out the words "w--wa--walk in," he burst out laughing.

"Do you know, Tom," he said, "it is so long since I have been in this room, that I had quite forgotten we had a parrot."

"Well, she does not intend you shall forget it any longer," Helen said, as she joined in the laugh. "Polly is a member of the family by no means to be neglected."

It was, indeed, a night for ghost stories; for the fast falling snow was being blown around the house by fierce gusts of wind that shook everything shakable, and caused everything to rattle outside that was not securely fastened. Margaret and Adele were present, the latter glad of something to do on such a night.

"There is a full house now," said Tom, when they were all comfortably settled. "Polly has acted as orchestra, and it is time for the curtain to rise on the ghost. I suppose that comes in in the last act, though."

"Oh, Tom," laughed Helen. "There isn't any ghost in my story at all."

"But you did say something about ghosts and that dress of your great-grandmother's."

"Yes, Tom. I said I could not wear it to the tea-party, for I should be afraid of ghosts. And so I should. My grandmother wore that dress at a time when she proved herself a heroine. I am not one; and were I to

wear that dress, and try to personate her, I should imagine the ghosts of my ancestors hovering around, and whispering in my ear: ‘Could you do as she did? Could you do as she did?’ I never did think it right to try to step into the shoes of others and personate them; for we do not know what brave, noble deeds they may have done, or what a caricature we make, if we could only see it. That is what I mean by Centennial ghosts.”

“H—m!” said Tom. “Never heard of ghosts in a prelude before. Southern style, I suppose. Quite new and original. Well, since we’ve had the ghosts, and are still alive to tell the tale, just fire away and give the story.”

In her usual manner Adele attempted to reprove Tom; but he took it good-naturedly, and said he supposed there might be a chance of his doing some things by the time he got to be a hundred. After a little more pleasantry from Tom, Helen began her story:

“My great-grandmother,” she said, “who owned that dress, had just grown up at the time of the ‘Boston Tea-party.’ Her father was a staunch tory, but she, with younger blood in her veins, and a mind that thought and looked into things on her own account, sympathized deeply with those who were fighting for freedom. I always think it was so noble in her to boldly declare her principles when she knew it would rouse her father’s anger, for he was very bitter. They had not moved to North Carolina then, and grandmother was where she was constantly meeting English officers; for her father was wealthy, and entertained a great deal. There was one officer, a Captain

Fowler, who was madly in love with her, and her father had quite made up his mind that she must marry him. But grandmother had met, at the house of her dearest friend, a brave, handsome fellow, whom she had learned to love devotedly. He was loyal to the principles of right and justice, and was one of those to whose courage and endurance we now owe our independence. It was known that great-grandmother and her father sympathized with opposite sides, and it was also known that great-grandmother herself saw constantly 'long-headed John,' as he was called; for he was known by both friend and foe as a daring, fearless fellow, ready at any moment to encounter danger, if by so doing he could help the cause for which he fought. It had been long known that he constantly gained information of the enemy's plans, but no one knew just how until it began to be whispered about that much of it came from my grandmother, and gradually it began to be rumored that her father himself was a traitor. Captain Fowler vowed vengeance against 'long-headed John,' and followed and watched him for months, without being able to catch him. Then he determined to apparently drop the search, and trust to luck to throw an opportunity in his way for doing what he had determined. He took up his courting in earnest, and insisted that an early day should be named for his marriage. My great-grandmother declared that nothing would induce her to promise to 'love, honor and obey' a man whom she could not respect. Her father threatened her in every way he could think of; but she never faltered,

even when the very day was named. She tried to persuade her father that she no longer owed him the blind obedience of a little child, and that she could not give it when her whole soul revolted. Her mother had died when she was very young, so that she had learned to look to her father for advice in everything until now, and he could not understand the change. I have thought so much of the struggle my grandmother must have gone through, in trying to avoid her father's displeasure, and still act as her conscience dictated. There is one letter of hers still preserved, in which she says: 'I have prayed God day and night that he would guide me in this, lest I make some mistake, and give me strength to feel that all will come right somewhere and somehow.' She was very beautiful, and her father was proud of her, and boasted of the number of suitors she had. Just why he favored Captain Fowler it is hard to tell, unless there were political reasons, but favor him he did, and that very decidedly. About the time the wedding day was appointed, my great-grandmother was told that a grand ball was to be given to the English officers, and that she must not only be present, but have an unusually elegant costume for the occasion. Knowing the time would soon come for her to leave her father entirely, for he had threatened to disown her if she refused to marry as he wished, she determined to please him in this, and had bought the costume now in my possession. They say she was more than usually beautiful that night, and her father was delighted with the notice she attracted, and began to think that,

after all, he might not have so much trouble with her as he thought. Captain Fowler followed her about, but she would have very little to say to him, and tried to keep out of his reach. When the gayety was at its height, she felt something mysteriously slipped into her hand, but by whom she could not tell, for she dared not look too closely about her; nor did she dare examine the paper in her hand until she could slip off for a moment, and be alone. When she did, she found it contained but a few badly spelled, mysterious words; but they were enough to tell her her favored lover was at the house of a woman named Betsy Harker, wounded, and perhaps, dying. She felt she must get to him as soon as possible, but that if she left just then suspicion would be excited at once; so she determined to watch her opportunity, and leave when she could do so and attract the least notice. Unconsciously, her father made things easier than she expected by telling her he should remain after she left, as there was to be a conference that he had been asked to attend.

“The minutes seemed like hours then I know until she could slip out unobserved. With a long, dark cloak thrown about her, she hurried through the streets, which, fortunately for her, were deserted at that hour. Fortunately, too, she knew where guards were stationed, and how to avoid them, thanks to her knowledge of the plans of some of the English officers. But her worst fears were for her journey in the country, for a mile of country road lay between her and her lover, and she

knew not what dangers were before her there. She had gone over the most of it, keeping in the shadow of the trees, for it was moonlight, and she dared not venture into the road itself, where she could be plainly seen, when a voice near said suddenly 'Halt!' She had seen the man a moment before, and knew that as he spoke a large tree, by which she was standing, stood between them. Quick as thought, she dropped to the foot of it in a heap, completely covered by her cloak. She heard the click of a musket as the sentinel approached, and his foot almost touched her, as he stopped in evident surprise at not seeing any one.

"'I certainly heard and saw some one moving by this tree,' she heard him say ; and then he used some stronger language and moved away. It was with fear and trembling that she at last looked out from under her cloak to see if there was any chance of escape. Imagine her consternation on seeing a company of soldiers approaching and interviewing the guard. As they drew a little nearer, she could even hear what was said.

"'I tell you, no woman could pass without my knowing it,' said the sentinel.

"My great-grandmother said there was some strong language used by both sides then ; and she learned that she had been missed in some way, and it was suspected that she had gone to give information to the enemy. She learned, too, that every road was being searched, and that it was confidently believed she would be captured somewhere. Her heart beat very rapidly as they came

nearer and nearer to the tree where she was, and suggested searching the woods."

"Oh, Cousin Helen, they did not really find her, did they?" interrupted Bessie.

"Don't stop her, Bessie," said Adele, "just at the most exciting part too."

Helen took one of Bessie's hands in hers, reassuringly, as she said :

"The good Lord heard her silent appeal to him ; and she said after she had made it with all the earnestness of her nature, she could almost feel his presence, and even when she knew that Captain Fowler himself was near enough to touch her if she stretched out her hand, she had no further fear ; for she felt that the strong arm of a mightier than he was about her, and she knew he would not leave her. It seemed to her ages that she was kept there, so still and quiet, looking, thanks to her dark cloak, like an old stump. How little those men thought, that at their very feet crouched the woman for whom they were searching, still arrayed in the costume that had attracted so much attention only a few hours before. While they were discussing the advisability of searching the woods carefully, the sentinel assured them that it was useless, as he had just been through a portion of them himself. He was evidently very uneasy, fearing lest they should find what he had searched for and failed to find. He was so decided, that Captain Fowler determined to take his advice, and retrace his way for a short distance to a cross-road, which was not so well watched. Cautiously

my great-grandmother looked out again as they turned their backs upon her, and to her delight saw the sentinel accompanying them. She waited until a turn in the road hid them all from view, and then rose quickly and hurried off, hoping to get out of sight herself before the sentinel returned to his post. She not only succeeded in doing that, but in reaching her destination without further adventure. There she found her lover so weak from the loss of blood and suffering, that he was only conscious at times, but he knew her when she arrived, and fervently thanked God she had come, for he believed himself dying; but Betsy Harker had cared for and tended wounded men before, and assured my great-grandmother now that her lover would not die, but would be better after he had rested and eaten more. She was one of the women whom the Lord prepared for emergencies. Without an attractive face, she had a helpful, encouraging manner, that gave hope and confidence. Her position in life was humble, but she worked for the Master with a soul so full of love for him, that nothing earthly inspired her with fear. She had found the wounded man in a ditch, where he had been left for dead, and with the help of a grandson, had brought him to her home, where she dressed his wounds and cared for him as though he had been her own son. For an hour my great-grandmother did not leave her lover's side. Then strange sounds outside caused her quickly to pick up his musket, examine it, and then enter an adjoining room where Betsy Harker, standing at the open door, was interviewing some one outside.

Imagine her horror on finding Captain Fowler and his company of men outside. He was declaring that all persons in the house, concealed or otherwise, were his prisoners, and he advised them to surrender peaceably.

“‘Never!’ said my great-grandmother, stepping forward.

“The captain laughed coarsely when he saw her, and told her he would separate her from her lover now, and would carry her back in triumph.

“‘You will never take me alive,’ she said, handling her musket in a resolute way; ‘but if my dead body will save the other members of this house from further molestation, you can order your men to fire. No one shall lay hands on me or approach this house as long as I can wield this weapon.’

“The captain was furious, and vowed he would have her dead rather than let another have her alive. Her very coolness angered him, and he gave directions for surrounding the house, in such sharp, loud tones, that the wounded man came, pale and tottering, to the door. As soon as he appeared the captain changed his orders, and gave the word to fire. But my great-grandmother was prepared for that and stepped in front of her lover, pushing him aside as she stood alone in her beauty to receive what she supposed would be death. Not a shot was fired however, for every soldier had seen her action. Betsy Harker had caught the wounded man as he fainted, and was powerless to aid my great-grandmother, when the infuriated captain stamped on the ground and

again gave the command to fire. Again no sound followed ; but an old gray-haired man approached, and catching the captain by the arm, begged him for the love of God to stop and let them go away. ‘Pray God,’ he said, ‘that if you are ever in trouble yourself, you may have as brave a defender as that fair girl.’

“ My great-grandmother said she had no fear of death herself at the time, if she could only save her lover ; and when she saw Captain Fowler knock down the man who had just spoken for her, she would have sprung forward, had not Betsy Harker caught her and whispered in her ear words that thrilled her with delight. Before the captain could recover himself and give further orders, a company of cavalry dashed forward, and in a shorter time than it takes to tell it, a miniature battle was in progress before the house. When it was over, the wounded on both sides were brought in, and kindly cared for by the two brave women. Among them was Captain Fowler ; and I often think of what he must have suffered when my great-grandmother was bending over him and treating him as though there had never been any but kindly feelings between them. As soon as possible, my great-grandmother and her lover returned to town and were quietly married at the home of Mrs. Duncan’s mother, my great-grandmother’s dear friend. My Tory grandfather, as I call him, would not see them ; and they remained with Mrs. Duncan’s mother until the war closed, when they went South to the home of my great-grandfather’s family. The dress worn at the ball and in which my great-grandmother faced

death for the sake of him she loved, was also her wedding dress. Do you see now, why I cannot wear it; and why I fear the family ghosts would rise and protest, should I do so?"

"Yes," said Margaret; "and I think you are right. It would seem almost wicked to do it."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Adele. "If it was my dress, I would not let a thing of that kind keep me from enjoying it and getting some good out of it."

"I think Cousin Helen is right not to wear it," said Bessie. "Don't you, papa?"

"Considering her view of ghosts, yes," said Mr. Carter, smiling.

"But, papa, you know she is not really and truly afraid of ghosts; but was it not grand? You must hear some more of Cousin Helen's stories. Did you not like this one?"

"Yes," said Mr. Carter, who thought he had not enjoyed an evening so much for a very long time as this one, spent with his young people.

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW, STRANGE THOUGHT.

MRS. DUNCAN'S tea-party was a success. At least every one who attended it said so, and it is generally understood that such a verdict is conclusive. Mrs. Duncan herself "looked as though she had stepped out of some old picture," as Helen expressed it when the affair was being discussed afterward. "But there were others too who looked so, and some of them were very, very lovely. I don't think I can ever enjoy anything more than I did that."

"Where in the world did Mrs. Duncan get all her old furniture?" asked Adele, who, not fearing nor caring for ghosts, had gone with George Washington and wife, as Nellie Custis.

"It has all been in her family for years," said Helen.

"Do you know," said Margaret, "I could not look at that weak-looking, dandified fellow, who took the character of George Washington, without thinking of what you said, and I wondered how he would have acted if suddenly informed that the enemy was approaching, or how he would have managed that trip across the Delaware. I rather enjoyed fancying what the celebrated personages who were represented there would think of their thin, weak shadows, could they have seen them."

"I hardly know if we have a right to judge of others in that way," said Helen, thoughtfully. "The Bible says, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' It may be, you know, that the 'dandified fellow' possesses some fine traits to which even the Father of his Country could not lay claim."

"I believe, Cousin Helen," said Bessie, "that you could always find excuses and something good to say of every one."

"Nonsense!" said Adele. "Helen dislikes people just as much as any one; and she turned and faced her as she asked: "Did you have anything to do with that fearful get-up of Mr. Edmands? I scarcely felt like speaking to him."

"No, I had no idea what he was going to wear; but I saw nothing fearful in it. It is just what any countryman would have worn; and he did behave so like one. For some reason, I hardly know why, I have always been half afraid of him before; but when he greeted me in his funny way, and told me he had 'jes' cum down frum Holler Hole, Varmount, 'ith a bar'l of maple an' some bar skins; and that he seen th' light 's he's apassin', an' cal'clated es how they's hevin' a quiltin' bee or a apple parin', an' he jes' stepped in ter see th' folks,' it took all that feeling away entirely. He was so funny all the evening, I think it did Mrs. Duncan good to see and hear him. But then she enjoyed the whole thing."

"I am glad I was there," said Margaret; "and I am more than glad I did not dress as I first intended."

Both Margaret and Helen had, by their unassuming characters, won more real, true admiration, than they would have had they done as so many of those about them, and assumed characters for which they were not fitted. More and more closely were they drawn together during the month that followed ; and although Margaret was the older of the two, she allowed herself to be led and influenced in many ways by the quiet little Southern girl, whose earnest life was having such an effect on those about her. As the time drew near for them to separate, Margaret begged earnestly that Helen would make her a visit before she went South ; but Helen was looking forward anxiously and eagerly to seeing "dear John," and nothing could tempt her to defer the time of her departure.

Such bright, happy letters as she received from him now too. There seemed so much to thank God for ; and when one day she learned that her Aunt Hannah had actually been to the house to see Maud, who was sick, she threw herself on the bed and cried for joy. She knew John had persuaded Maud to go with him, soon after her own departure, to see the old lady, and she knew that since then, the girl had spent many of her spare hours there, and in her humble way had gone to the old lady for help and advice in the new position she had assumed ; but she did not realize the full significance of it until she knew of her aunt's visit to the house. Then she thanked God heartily, and prayed that he would keep her dear ones safe, and make her more worthy of all the blessings he was bestowing on her. Her happiness reflected itself in

her face to such an extent, that her uncle asked her, a few days before she was to leave, if it made her so very, very happy to think of going away. Putting her arms lovingly about his neck and kissing him, she said :

“ Uncle, I think you will understand me, when I say that though I can never thank you enough for letting me come here, and for all you have done for me, yet it makes me very, very happy to think of seeing dear John again.”

“ And it makes me very sad to think of losing the little household angel who has been with us so long,” said her uncle, tenderly.

“ I wish I could take you all home with me,” said Helen, smiling. “ I would like you to know John, uncle. I am sure you would like him.”

“ If he is like his sister, there would be no danger of anything else.”

“ But he’s ever, and ever, and ever so much nicer,” said Helen, warmly.

“ I do believe you two people are making love to each other,” said Tom, entering at this moment.

“ No use to make it,” said Helen, indignantly. “ It’s here ;” and she gave her uncle’s hand an affectionate squeeze that made Tom laugh.

“ I say,” he said, abruptly, “ I wish you would let some of these fellows make love to you here, and marry one of them, so you could stay here always.”

“ I marry ! Oh, Tom ! ” and she burst into a merry peal of laughter.

“Why not, I’d like to know?” said Tom, gruffly. “You’d make a better wife than half the girls fellows do take.”

“But, Tom,” said Helen, more seriously, “you forget dear John. I could never leave him.”

“And suppose ‘dear John’ gets married himself! What then?”

Instantly Helen’s whole manner changed. Her face became very white, and with a gasp she sat down, and looked in a bewildered way at Tom.

“Hello! What have I done now?” he asked.

“I—— I don’t quite know,” she said, in a confused way, as she rose and added, “I must go and think.”

“H’m! I’ve done it now,” murmured Tom, when she was gone; “but I don’t know what. Do you, father?”

“I’m afraid Helen has never thought of the possibility of her brother’s marrying; and the idea is not one she can contemplate calmly at first.”

Tom was troubled, the more so when Helen did not appear at dinner, nor again that evening. He could not quite understand why his remark had so completely upset her; but he knew, when he saw her in the morning, that she had really suffered. While she was just as thoughtful of others, there was a look in her face that made him feel uncomfortable. He was wondering if he would bungle again, and only make matters worse if he said anything, when she spoke herself.

“Tom,” she said, coming straight to the point, “I suppose you thought it very strange in me to act as I

did yesterday ; but John and I have been so much together, and he has been so all-sufficient to me, that the thought has never struck me before that he might ever care for anything different."

" And, I say, I'm sorry I said what I did. I wish I'd cut my tongue out first."

" I'm not sorry, Tom ; because, you know, I ought to think of such a thing, and I'm glad I could do it first away from John, when he would not know how hard it was for me."

" Well, but he may never get married, after all, you know."

" Don't say that, Tom. You see, since I have thought about it, I can see how happy it would make him. He's had a life full of care, anxiety, and trouble, and, as long as I can remember, has had to give up his own aims and ambitions for the sake of others. I suppose, because I felt it was a burden he could not question, I have not thought of its being removed, and other things given in its place ; but all things are possible with him who has imposed the burden, and since I have thought of dear John in a home of his very own, with a wife who would help to make it a happy one, I can but hope it may come to him some time, and I shall pray earnestly that God may open the way."

" You seem to forget yourself now."

" No, Tom ; but, you see, I will always have dear John's strong, true love, whatever happens. Do you think I would deserve it, if I wished to keep from him some great happiness ?"

Tom said nothing for a moment, and when he did speak his brows were knit as he said :

“ I sometimes think, Helen, that it must come naturally easier to you to act unselfishly than to others.”

Helen smiled, but made no answer to this ; and, before many days, Tom was wishing again his tongue had been cut out before he had made such a remark.

By luncheon time, Helen’s face was bright and happy once more ; for the time was drawing nearer when she should see the brother who was so dear to her. On her way from her drawing lesson that morning, she had purchased some simple little gifts to take South with her ; but she knew her own work, in the way of drawings, would please her brother more than anything else she could take him. She had put her whole heart and soul into her work, and, in consequence, had succeeded beyond her own expectations. It was pleasant to think of John’s surprise, and her mind was full of pleasant anticipations, when Adele rushed into her room, in great excitement, to tell her that she and her mother and father were to sail for Europe in less than a week ; the house was to be closed, and Tom and Bessie sent to boarding school.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRUGGLE.

“WHY, Bessie dear,” said Helen, putting her arms tenderly about the child, who had thrown herself across her bed, and was sobbing convulsively.

“I can’t help it, Cousin Helen,” said the child, brokenly; “but, I don’t want papa to know.”

“Then, tell me all about it, and let us talk of it together.”

For a moment, the child could not speak, but clung to Helen as though fearful every instant she would leave her, and Helen gently tried to soothe her, guessing at the trouble, but knowing it was best the child should speak of it herself. She had been a good deal worried over this sudden decision of her uncle, not on his account, but on account of Tom and Bessie; but she knew the same thoughts had troubled her uncle as well, and she would not add to his anxiety by speaking of them. It was Tom, however, of whom she had thought more particularly, and now here was Bessie to be considered too.

“If Tom and I could only stay here at home!” she sobbed.

“Perhaps it won’t be so hard to go to school, after all,” said Helen.

“If Tom and I could go together,” she said, “I would

not mind so much; but with him away, and all the others, and you too, I expect I shall just want to die."

"Hush, dear, don't talk like that."

"You don't know how it makes me feel. I wish Adele did not want to go so awfully."

"Why, Bessie?"

"Because papa says if she would stay at home, he could arrange it so that Tom and I could stay here too. That would be ever and ever so much better than the other; but he promised Adele she could go the next time he went, and now she won't think of anything else. If I could only be with Tom, and if we could only stay here at home! It would be very lovely; but I know papa must go, and that mamma must go with him, and—and—Cousin Helen, what am I to do away from every one I love?"

"There is One who will be with you, dear, wherever you go. Don't forget that."

"I tried to talk to him awhile ago, but he had gone so far away, I could not."

"No, dear, that was you, not he. He is nearer to you than ever now. Let us talk to him together."

Simply as a child, she asked God to help the little one by her side to feel his nearness, and to be willing to see things as he would have her see them. Without a word, Bessie put her face up and kissed her cousin; then lay back with closed eyes, as though in silent prayer.

"I don't quite know how I am to do without you to

help me," she said sadly, when she looked up. "I wish you were my real, own, true sister. I don't think you would go away then, if you knew."

Helen started, as a sudden thought struck her, but she would not put it into words; nor would she think of it if she could help it. It clung to her, however, making her uncomfortable and absent-minded, so that at dinner, Adele, full of her own delight at the prospect of a trip abroad, became impatient, and spoke sharply to her when she made some embarrassing blunder. The sight of Bessie's face, with its patient, half-startled look, only confused her still more, and caused Tom to wonder if anything had been said to make her feel uncomfortable. Thinking it better to turn her thoughts from herself to another, he said to her after dinner:

"I say, Helen, you know I don't mind about myself. It's all right for me to go to boarding school now. I know it, and shall try to behave like a man about it; but there's Bessie! She's so nervous and worried without some of the family about, that I'm afraid she will really be sick. I don't suppose it would do to think of asking Adele to stay at home; do you?"

"No," said Helen, soberly, adding with a look Tom never forgot: "I'll try to think of some other way."

That night was one of the most uncomfortable Helen had ever spent. For hours she sat before the fire trying to ease her conscience, and persuade herself that she was not called on to do this thing. No, no, she must go back to John. He needed her and she needed him.

Her home and heart were with him, and surely she could not be expected to give up what was more to her than going abroad was to Adele. No. They were not her brother and sister; and John, her brother, would be so much disappointed. Surely she was not called upon to do this thing. She leaned her head upon the table by her side, and tried to think of other things; but Bessie's sorrowful face would force itself into her memory, and with it would come an anxious dread lest the child should really be taken sick, as Tom suggested. She tried to pray; but instead of words, there came a great longing for something it seemed impossible to express. In time she fell asleep from sheer exhaustion, with her head still resting on the table; but she woke with a sudden start, and found Bessie by her side.

"I can't get to sleep," said the child, sadly.

"What is it, dear?" asked Helen, taking her into her lap and hugging her tightly. She was startled at the child's looks, and could feel her trembling.

"It won't let me go to sleep."

"What, Bessie?"

"The big eyes."

"What big eyes?"

"There's a teacher at the school where I'm going that has them. They follow you just everywhere. I saw them once when I went there with mamma, and they frightened me. I see them now, every time I shut my eyes; and I can't go to sleep."

"Suppose you try it here, with me," said Helen. "Let

me put you in my bed, and then, with me by your side, perhaps you can forget the eyes. After all, they may turn out to be kind, pleasant ones, you know."

"Do you think so?" asked the child, eagerly.

"I should not wonder at all."

"I don't think I would mind quite so much if I thought that," said Bessie, "and I will try to think it now; but, Cousin Helen, did every one you loved go away and leave you with strangers when you were as young as I am?"

Gently Helen soothed the child until she fell asleep, and then her thoughts once more went back to self. She knew by this time what it would be right for her to do; but she could not make up her mind to do it cheerfully and willingly. She could not give up self entirely. The next morning she was unusually quiet at breakfast, and started out to her drawing lesson earlier than usual. She did not want to speak to her uncle until she could do so cheerfully. When she did speak, it must be in a way that would convince him that she had fully made up her mind, and was in earnest about what she proposed. Hoping that a morning's healthful work would help her, she tried to put her whole heart in it; but it was useless, and giving up the attempt, she turned her thoughts to one who, she knew, had fought similar battles, and come off victorious. To Mrs. Duncan's she went, and throwing herself at her feet, and looking imploringly into her face, said :

"I have been trying to make my will God's will.

Ask him to help me make his will mine, cheerfully."

With one hand resting on the bowed head before her, and the other held tightly by her companion, Mrs. Duncan prayed so earnestly and believably, that it seemed to Helen almost as though her prayer was answered, before expressed. When it was over, she felt as though the gentle voice of her Lord and Master had been heard, saying to her troubled soul: "Peace, be still;" and a feeling of rest had come to her that showed itself in her face, when she raised it again.

"I can't tell you how that has helped me," she said, "but I must be sure of myself before I act. Will you let me tell you just what the trouble has been?"

Very simply she told of the change of plans in her uncle's family, and of the struggle she had gone through herself.

"It may be, you know, that God has been preparing me and others for this very thing," she said. "At one time I could not have stayed, for I was needed at home; but since I have been away, Maud, my step-sister, has learned to keep house, and to look after things so nicely, that I am not actually needed for that. I mean, you know, that I am really more needed here. I tried to think the other way, at first, because I did so want to see John; but I see now how selfish that was, and I know I would never forgive myself if I did go home and left Bessie and Tom just when they needed me--after all uncle's kindness too. I don't see now how it took me

so long to see that it was one way God offered me of showing uncle I appreciated what he has done for me. I must hurry home now, and see him as soon as he comes in, so that he need not worry about Bessie and Tom."

She spoke so cheerfully, and seemed so thoroughly in earnest, that any one else might have thought her struggle had been less severe than it was ; but Mrs. Duncan knew the girl well enough by this time to guess at the full extent of it, and as she was bidding her good-bye, said :

" Brother John will love his sister more than ever, now that she has taken up so cheerfully these new duties laid before her."

A bright, happy smile was her only answer ; but when her son came home that day, she said :

" Could you not look up some business matter that might give you an excuse to send on for the brother ? "

" The very thing. I've got hold of something now," said Mr. Duncan, " that he might make something of, if his talent is what I think it is. At any rate, I can send for him and see. We'll see. Keep it as a surprise for Helen."

" Would it not seem a pity to deprive her of the pleasure of anticipation ? "

" True. You are right, as you always are, mother. We won't take from her a moment's pleasure."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE UNSELFISH DECISION.

WITH a lighter heart than she had possessed for several days, Helen hurried home, wondering at the change; for it had seemed only a few hours before, as though her weary, burdened heart was ready to break. But he to whom all things are possible, and who is ever ready to hear the cry of one of his little ones, had changed everything, and the rough road had been made smooth.

Her uncle was not at home when she returned, but in the sitting room she found Bessie with a sad little face that tried to put on a smile. The attempt was such a signal failure, that Helen could scarcely keep back the tears as she drew the child to her and said, gently:

“I think I’ve found a way to keep you and Tom together, dear.”

“Oh, Cousin Helen!” she said, nervously. “How?”

“Will you let me stay and take care of you, if father is willing?”

“You—you, Cousin Helen! I thought you were so glad to go home.”

“I did not know of this, then.”

“And you would really stay here with Tom and me instead of going to your own home?” asked the child,

anxiously, her large eyes looking searchingly into her cousin's face.

"Yes, dear, I would not be happy to go there now and leave you and Tom. Understand, Bessie, it would make me happier to stay here than to go home."

Bessie did understand, and the tears came thick and fast as she laid her head on her cousin's shoulder and cried softly for a few moments.

"It's because I'm so glad," she said when she could speak, "and because I do love you so. I can never tell you how much."

Already Helen was thankful, for Bessie's sake, that the Lord had given her strength to conquer, as she had, in the battle she had been fighting with self. In her simple childish way, Bessie began at once to talk of what they would do and where they would go, planning little trips that she thought would please Helen. In the midst of this, Tom appeared, and with wide-open, excited eyes, Bessie sprang toward him, and catching one arm in both her hands, began hurriedly :

"Tom, Cousin Helen says she's going to stay here while the others go away; and we're just going to have the best kind of a time."

Tom looked questioningly first at Bessie, and then at Helen, who replied with a smile:

"If your father is willing."

"And you're not going home at all?"

"Not at present."

"Well, I say it's mighty good of you to think of it, but

I don't think you ought to do it. Going home is as much to you as going to Europe is to Adele, and no one expects her to give that up. It's Bessie I mind, of course, for I can get along; but I'm afraid she'll get sick or something, you know. It would be a mighty nice thing I can tell you, but it don't seem right to me."

Bessie had left Tom and had gone back to Helen and nestled close to her as though fearful she might leave at once. Helen could feel her actually trembling as she put an arm about her reassuringly, when she said:

"Tom, I am quite sure that I would rather stay here than go home; and you must help me persuade your father to let me do it. Suppose we see if we can find him now."

Tom saw that she was thoroughly in earnest, but made no further comment until they were on their way down stairs, when he said:

"I can't thank you for this, Cousin Helen; but the Lord will make it up to you some way, I suppose."

Mr. Carter was rather taken by surprise at the proposition made to him, and was at first inclined to refuse to have anything to do with it. It was mortification enough, he said, to have another offer to do what his own daughter could, under no consideration, be induced to do. Very earnestly Helen pleaded that it would be a great pleasure to her, and that it would be so much better for Tom and Bessie. Mr. Carter knew that, but he also knew with what delight Helen had looked forward to being with her brother. It was Tom, in his off-hand way, who

settled the matter ; and as they were leaving, Mr. Carter said softly, so that only Helen could hear :

“ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Three days later, down in Carolina, a young girl was weeping bitterly over a letter she had just received. It was Maud ; and John, in his quiet way, was trying to soothe her.

“ I can’t think she wanted to come home so much, or that she loved us so much as I thought she did,” said the girl, “ or she would never have stayed.”

“ It was no want of love for us, Maud, but a desire to do the Master’s work that has kept her. I do not think it was easy for her at first ; but he had given her the work, and she has not only accepted it, but has accepted it cheerfully. Don’t you think we ought to be glad to have her do it, and try to make it easy for her ? She has tried to keep us from knowing just how hard it has been to give up seeing us. You know how full her letters have been of it lately.”

“ And this one,” said Maud, indicating the one that had caused her unhappiness, “ is one of the dearest and loveliest I ever read. It was so good in her to write to me at the same time she did to you. I wish I was half as thoughtful. Brother John,”—she had learned to call him that at his own request lately,—“ why is it, that no matter what happens, she always seems cheerful and happy ? ”

“ One reason is, that she is always doing something to make others happy.”

"I wish I could do it, and do it as cheerfully as she does," said Maud, sadly.

"You do more of it than you think," said John, who knew something of the struggles with self that the girl had been called on to make lately, struggles that were forming her character, struggles such as all are called on to engage in, when no compromise can be effected, but when it must be victory or death to self. He had watched anxiously the results, for he had taken a deep interest in her, and had discovered traits that he particularly admired, and that gave promise of much that was good in the future.

CHAPTER XX.

JOHN'S VISIT.

IN less than a week from the time the European trip was decided on, the travelers were off, and Helen, with her two charges and a widowed aunt of Mrs. Carter, were all who constituted the family in New York. Mrs. Belvin, the aunt, was a sufferer from rheumatism, and seldom left the house; but her presence took the weight of responsibility from Helen. She had been greatly saddened by sorrow and suffering, and as old age crept on, lived more and more in the past, caring little for the present, and taking no interest in the progress of the world, or its aims in the future. Both Mr. and Mrs. Carter had felt that it would never do to leave Tom and Bessie alone with her; but with a fresh, bright, younger life to counteract the effect of the more sober one, they were content. Mrs. Carter had thanked Helen very warmly for her unselfishness, and there had been tears in her eyes as she bade her good-bye, and called her a noble girl. To Helen's surprise, Adele had come to her the night before they left, and had talked as she had never talked before.

"I suppose," she said, "I ought to tell you that I am rather ashamed of myself for going away and leaving you here; but I just can't give up this trip, even though

I know I might go a few months later, if I stayed at home now. There is no use in my wishing to be good, or to do any better than I have done, for I just can't."

"I wish you would not talk so, Adele."

"You must let me do it, though ; for there have been some things on my mind lately that it would be much better to speak of, so just let me talk and have it out. When you came here, I expected to find you a doll that I could dress up and play with as I chose. Instead, you have proved to have ten times more principle and character than I. There was an inclination to laugh at some of your 'notions,' as I called them ; but I admire you for them now, and I can understand how one's heart and soul can be so full of good works that there is no room nor time for what are called worldly pleasures. It may seem strange to you, but the very fact of your never pretending to lecture me has had more influence over me, and has done more to show me the 'error of my ways' than a thousand and one lectures could have done. Your silent example was the most effective thing you could have said. Your influence in our home too, has not been unnoticed by me. The affection of Tom and Bessie for you has shown me how often I have failed as a sister. I have learned some lessons too, as to caring too much for appearances. I have always been ashamed of that time in the store when I passed you by unnoticed, because you were with that queer-looking aunt. I don't think I would do it now, though the scene still almost makes me laugh when I think of it. You have done us

all good, Helen, and I could not go away without telling you. Sometimes I think I would like to be as good as you are; but I do not know that I shall care enough for it to make an effort, though I am glad I told you all about it. I suppose I ought to be jealous of you, because every one admires and likes you, and because you would be missed in the house here more than I; but somehow I can't be. There, don't let's talk that way any more. I'm tired of it. Come, it's our last evening at home for three months, let us try to have a good time, and forget anything uncomfortable. I suppose there will be a host of people here to say good-bye."

She started off with a laugh, and the subject discussed was not referred to again; but Helen thought of it often after Adele was gone, hoping and praying that she might decide to "taste and see that the Lord is good."

From Margaret she had parted with sincere regret, for she had grown very fond of her, and had learned to look for a visit from her every night before retiring. These visits were helps to both the girls, and now Helen missed them; but she devoted herself to her drawing again, spent much of her time with Tom and Bessie, and paid frequent visits to Mrs. Duncan. Twice Mr. Edmands had come in the evening, and brought something to interest them all; once an old Roman jewel, whose history was interesting; again an Indian wedding dress, cut in its queer, "paper doll shape," as Bessie said, but heavily covered with bead work. His account of his travels in the Indian country of the West, and of the

way in which he came into possession of the dress, was like a fairy tale, Bessie told him.

"I do hope he will come soon again," she said. "I like him better than any one else who visits us."

Helen laughed at her enthusiasm; but she had noticed that Mrs. Belvin too, was interested in what he had said, and hoped herself that he would soon repeat his visit. But one of greater interest to her yet was coming soon. She learned of it first through a letter from John himself, saying that he would be in New York on a certain day, and would probably make her a visit of a week. She read the letter first in her own room, and, with a quick cry of joy, buried her face in her hands, and poured out her thanks to him from whom all good things come. How happy the thought made her! It seemed as though every one else must be happy too; and for two days she went about without an idea that they were not. By that time Tom's grum, dissatisfied look attracted her, and she at once tried to discover the cause of it. It was some little time before she could do so; and then it was a shock to think that John's coming could bring anything but pleasure to any one.

"You see, we've had you all to ourselves, and we kind of feel as though you belonged to us. Now he's coming, and you'll care more for him. I say, I wish there was some place I could stay while he's here. I did not mean to tell you, but you would know," he said, a little gruffly.

"I'm so very, very sorry you feel in that way," said

Helen, with a disappointed look. "I thought you would be glad to have him come, and I hoped you would make it pleasant for him while here."

"Well, I shan't. He won't need any one but you. I'm glad, for your sake, he's coming; but I'd just like to be out of the way."

Helen hardly knew just what to say, and thought, perhaps, it would be wiser to say very little, but to trust to John himself to make it all right, for she felt sure Tom would like him, when he once knew him. It worried her to think he should feel so; but she did not mean to let it affect her pleasure in seeing John, feeling sure it would come out right in the end.

The next day brought John himself, but on an earlier train than that on which he was expected. Bessie was the only one at home, except Mrs. Belvin, who was confined to her room that day, but she tried to welcome him as she thought Helen would like her to. She had taken him to the sitting room, and was conversing in a most friendly manner when the door opened, and Tom appeared.

"This is Tom, I know," said John, stepping forward, and holding out his hand. "I am very glad to meet you," he added, when Tom, taken by surprise, allowed his hand to be shaken, "and to be able to thank you personally for all you have done to make Helen's stay here pleasant."

There was something so honest and sincere in the face of the man addressing him, and something so manly and

strong in the form, that Tom could not help admiring him, though he noticed that his clothes were not of the newest and latest style. All this combined to make him respect him, and replying, with equal honesty, he said :

“ I am afraid it is some one else you mean. I have never done much to make it pleasant for her.”

“ I suspect we know more of that at home than you do yourself. Your name is quite a household word with us. Maud and I often talk of you, and she sent you all kinds of nice messages, because of your kindness to Helen, whom she loves very dearly. She almost feels as though she knew you, and would be glad to know you better. Perhaps you can hunt me up a photograph to take back with me. By the way, I have brought with me a crayon drawing of Helen’s mother. I intended to have it as a surprise for her when she came home, but we must let her enjoy it now while she is here. Will you go with me some time and help select a frame? You’ve become a sort of brother too, you know, and I’d like you to share this pleasure with me.”

This was the man Tom had wished to avoid. He was thoroughly ashamed of himself now, and in his straightforward way would doubtless have confessed all and apologized, if Helen herself had not appeared just at that moment. Tom never forgot the glad look that came into her face when she first saw John. He quietly slipped out of the room, a sudden, strange thought coming to him. Would it ever be possible for Bessie to be

so glad to see him ? When he was next alone with Helen for a moment, he said at once :

“ I say, I was a brute to say what I did yesterday. If you’ll try not to think of it I will be glad. John’s a trump. I take back all I said, and I’ll try my best to help him have a good time.”

“ Thank you so much, Tom,” said Helen, laying a hand on his arm. “ I felt sure you would like him when you knew him.”

How rapidly the week passed, and how much pleasure they all got out of it too ! There were so many places to which to take John, who thoughtfully devoted his mornings to business, leaving his afternoons free, when Tom and Bessie, as well Helen, could go about with him. One day they all dined with Mrs. Duncan, and another day Mr. Edmands, who had called on John, at once invited them to dine with him at Delmonico’s, after taking them to one of the private picture galleries. That was a particularly interesting experience to Bessie, though she insisted upon it, they would all have enjoyed it more if a certain Mrs. Wardner, whom she did not like, had not been with them. One of the greatest pleasures Tom had from this visit was selecting the frame for the crayon portrait which John had showed him.

“ I say,” he began—— “ bother ! I promised Helen I would try to give up beginning all my sentences in that way, and there it is again ; but, I say, would you mind ; no—— I don’t suppose she’d like it so well.”

“ What ? Tell me what and of whom you are speaking.”

“No. Best not.”

“I’m not quite sure of that. I suppose ‘she’ means Helen?”

“Yes; I was only thinking that I’d like a partnership arrangement about that frame business. I thought perhaps you would let me foot half the bill, or something; but I guess she would like it better the other way. So it’s all right, you know.”

“I’m not at all sure that Helen would prefer it in that way. It would be a great pleasure to her to know that you even thought of such a thing, and if you really wish it, I shall be very happy to have you join me in giving her this little bit of happiness.”

“Do you really mean it?”

“To be sure, I do.”

“Then, I say——I am glad to know you, sir,” and he gave John’s hand a shake that said as much as the words.

The picture was hung when Helen was out, and then Tom considerately kept out of the way, giving her a chance to see and thank John alone. His own share came in due time, and well repaid him for what he had done, for he had taken the money he had laid aside for a new tennis racket in the spring.

Never had a week seemed to slip by so fast. To Helen it went by so rapidly that she was startled; but as great a treat as it was to have her brother with her, she did not allow his presence to interfere with any duty that might affect another. She had one or two sick people whom

she visited regularly, one at the hospital, and one in a small room on one of the back streets near her home. The latter was a young girl who earned her own living as a clerk. She had refused to go to a hospital when she was first taken sick, because she said her father, who was all she had in the world, had given up drink only a few months before, and it was easier for him to stay at home at night if she was there. She did not mind being sick, she said, nor being without comforts, so long as he was all right. Helen took John here with her when she knew the father would be at home, hoping that he might do or say some little thing that would be remembered. And he did speak words so helpful and full of hope that, as they were leaving, the father took him by the hand, and said:

“ You have done us both good, sir, and I hope wherever you go, your life may be a happy one. Your sister, sir, comes and goes like one of those gentle spirits whose very presence is a blessing.”

Another time Helen took John to the hospital, where she knew he would make himself remembered by some suffering soul. Thus, she was constantly giving others an opportunity of benefiting by his visit, never letting even him know how she longed for more time herself for good home talks. She could only get these in snatches, but they were enjoyed when they did come.

“ You have found out,” said John, on one of these occasions, “ that everywhere you go, there will be work for the Master. I can see and understand what you have

done here better than you can yourself, dear, and it makes me very happy. I never doubted, for an instant, that you would find something to do; but when I see what a blessing you have been——”

“Don’t say that, please, John. I’ve been rebellious at times, and have found it hard to do what I knew the Lord had given me. He has always made it easy for me, though, when I have found courage to do it, and he has given me so much to make me happy. Your coming here alone is so very, very much to me.”

To her delight and surprise John told her, before he left, that his trip had done much for him in a business way, and might be the means of giving him work of the kind he preferred to farming. He could not tell positively just yet.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

ON one of those bright sunshiny days that come to us in winter, and make us feel glad that we are alive, Helen and Bessie started out for a walk, little dreaming of the sad scene that would attend their home-coming. The occasion was an accident that seemed to paralyze those who saw but could not prevent it. Bessie had stumbled and fallen on a crossing just as a horse suddenly turned the corner. With wonderful presence of mind, Helen had sprung forward and caught the bridle tightly with both hands to turn him aside; but the horse had reared, carrying her up in the air only to bring her down again with great force. Prompt as the action was, there were those who believed, as they drew the unconscious child from under the horse, while her heroic older companion swung in mid-air, that the one heavy foot that had touched her had been accompanied by the hand of death. Those who carried the child to the nearest drug store, believed it a question whether the girl who had tried to save her would be picked up alive. Indeed, Mr. Keener, an elderly gentleman, who caught her as she loosened her hold of the horse, shook his head sadly as he carried her insensible form to the sidewalk. It seemed to him that she must be seriously injured; but

she opened her eyes, and looking anxiously about, asked :

“ Where is she ? ”

“ I will take you to her if you think you can bear it , ” he said, seeing by her face that nothing else would satisfy her.

“ Let me walk, please. I would rather.”

“ Then lean on me, never mind how hard , ” said Mr. Keener, encouragingly. “ I can carry you, if necessary.”

“ She was not —— hurt ? ” she asked, wincing herself, and uttering a half-stifled groan.

“ A little —— yes ; but where are you hurt ? ”

“ In my hands and arms ; but it is nothing.”

Mr. Keener feared there were further injuries, of which she scarcely knew yet, but he spoke a few encouraging words, and as soon as they reached the place where Bessie had been taken, insisted on her taking something before she went to her cousin.

“ Only a glass of water, please , ” she said, as the faint, dizzy feeling caused her to sit down on the nearest seat. It did not prevent her hearing an order given by her companion, and looking up quickly, she added : “ No, I could not take it. Nothing but water, please. I must go to Bessie.”

“ I cannot let you go to her until you have taken something to strengthen you. If I give you what I can assure you has no alcohol in it, will you trust me and take it ? ”

She looked him full in the face, as though she would judge him by that, and then said simply:

“Yes.”

In an inner room they had laid Bessie on a couch, and when Helen entered, she stole softly to her side, and slipping to the floor laid her head on the pillow by the side of the child’s, and said softly:

“Bessie dear?”

Anxiously she listened and watched for the result; for the closed eyes and white face had caused a great fear to spring up in her heart. She had not thought of anything so terrible as this. A faint groan answered her, and a trembling little hand moved as though feeling for something. Mr. Keener saw the drops of perspiration come out on Helen’s face as she pressed her lips together and slowly raised one hand until she could lay it on that of the child. A tall, spectacled man, who had been trying to examine Bessie, here turned to Helen, and asked her name and residence, and then said something in a low tone to Mr. Keener.

“Will you please send for a carriage and get us home as soon as possible,” said Helen, looking up, “and telephone for Dr. Taylor to be there.”

“We must send some message home before the little one goes, so that the mother may not be shocked,” said Mr. Keener.

“Her mother and father are both in Europe, and there is no one at home but an invalid aunt, who need not know anything of this until I can tell her myself.”

The two men exchanged glances, and then the older one, looking down at the child, said :

“ Is there no friend you would like sent for ? ”

“ I think Mr. Duncan ought to know,” said Helen, thoughtfully.

“ What Duncan ? ” asked Mr. Keener, “ Charles Duncan ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ I’ll go for him myself, if you’ll promise not to attempt to leave here till I return with him. What physician did you say ? ”

“ Dr. Edward Taylor.”

“ I know him too, and I’ll bring him with me. In the meantime I leave you in good hands here. Hope for the best. Everything shall be done that can be.”

Entering the outer room, Mr. Keener was surprised to find himself face to face with Dr. Taylor. Telling him as briefly as possible what had happened, he led him into the room where the two girls were. Eagerly and anxiously did Helen watch his face for any signs of hope or encouragement, as he carefully and tenderly examined the child. At times she would moan piteously, but even then Helen could read nothing in the doctor’s countenance, and could only silently pray that the child might be spared, and that her sufferings might not be severe. When his examination was over, the doctor rose, and approaching Mr. Keener said, with a very sober face :

“ I cannot tell very decidedly until I get the child home and examine more carefully. I will telephone to

Drs. Harvey and Lansom to meet me there, and I will see to getting the child there while you go for a trained nurse, and—you said you were on the way to find Mr. Duncan as well as me?"

"Yes."

"Then bring him too."

"What is your opinion now, from what you have seen?"

"If there are internal injuries that I fear, the child will not live twenty-four hours; but if it is as I hope, she will live, but it will be months before she will be able to walk."

A stifled cry caused the doctor to turn quickly and see Helen standing by his side. He had not intended that she should hear what he had been saying; but knowing that she had heard it, he spoke to her as to one he felt sure would bravely meet whatever the future had in store. He had been impressed with her conduct in her uncle's sick room, and was able to judge somewhat of her strength of character now. He found, however, that she made a better nurse than patient, for when he expressed a wish to examine her hands and wrists, she objected, saying that amounted to nothing, and it was only keeping them from Bessie. He found it necessary to tell her she might render herself perfectly powerless to aid the child, if she did not let him look after her injuries.

"You do not think that?" she asked, anxiously, as she allowed him to carefully remove her coat.

“I think,” he said, examining the swollen hands and wrists, “that unless you do just what I wish with these hands and arms, it will be a long time before you can minister to your cousin as you did to her father.” And without farther question, he cut the sleeves of her dress up to her shoulders; for it would have been utterly impossible to have drawn them over her swollen hands.

“She will need me so!” said Helen.

“You forget that if it were not for this, she would never need you nor any earthly help again. If she lives, it will be due to your presence of mind and courage. Everything shall be done for her that can be done; but we must look after you, too, knowing what a fine nurse you are. We shall need you, and the sooner you are able —.” He saw that she was fainting, and stopped.

CHAPTER XXII.

A LONG NIGHT.

IT was a sad household Mr. Duncan found when he entered his friend's home, for Bessie was a favorite with every one in it, and even the servants met him with tears in their eyes. Helen had told Mrs. Belvin of the accident; but the old lady took such a mournful and hopeless view of it, that she did not feel called upon to stay with her long.

"I knew it," she said. "Something of the kind always happens, wherever I go; but I am getting to expect it, and it makes very little impression. One less in the world, to suffer as I have done. That is all. I will just stay in my room, and wait patiently until it is all over. You can send my meals to me, and let me know when the end comes."

After having gone through so much, Helen felt that she could not stand this, and hurried away that she might have courage to meet Tom; but he had arrived while she had been with Mrs. Belvin, and had heard of the accident from Mr. Duncan. They met in the hall, outside Bessie's room, and Helen knew at once that Tom had been told. Her hands were bandaged, and in a sling; but she went up to him, intending to say some-

thing to him. Instead, he put his arms around her carefully and kissed her, as he said, brokenly :

“They tell me, if she lives, it will be you who have saved her.”

She could feel the big tears dropping on her face as he spoke, and she said quietly :

“It will be God’s will, either way, Tom.”

“Then pray, Helen ; pray as you never prayed before, that he will not take her from us.”

“And you, Tom. Will not you pray too ?”

“If I thought it would do any good——”

“Try it, Tom.”

“I will.”

The door opened at this moment, and Dr. Taylor came out, and said :

“She is conscious now, and is asking for you, Miss Helen.”

Thinking at once of Tom, she looked from him to the doctor in a questioning way, which the doctor understood at once.

“One at a time,” he said, kindly. “I shall give Tom some work soon, and when she is rested a little, and will not be much excited, he can go in.”

“Can’t you hide my hands, in some way ?” she asked, in a troubled way.

“She knows,” said the doctor ; “you need not be afraid of that. Keep up your courage and hope for the best.”

Two strange physicians came out of the room as Helen

went in, leaving only the nurse, a bright, pleasant looking woman, whose snow-white cap and apron gave a fresh, helpful look to her whole appearance. She was on her knees by the side of the bed when Helen entered; but she rose at once, and coming toward her, said :

“ She wants to be with you alone for a while, and she wants you on the bed by her side. You must let me help you get there. I will have to wait on you as well as on her, for a while, that you may be able the sooner to do for her what I know you would like.”

Without a word Helen allowed herself to be almost lifted and laid on the bed, Miss Harlan saying, as she did it :

“ I will be in the next room, should you want me.”

“ Do your hands hurt very, very much ? ” asked Bessie, raising one of hers, and laying it lovingly on Helen’s face, that was very close to her own.

“ They will soon be all right, dear,” said Helen, trying to speak without an effort.

“ And you do not think I will be ? Cousin Helen, that is why I asked for you. I knew you would tell me the truth, and would not try to deceive me. Am I going to die ? ”

“ We trust God will spare you to us, dear ; but should he want you in his own beautiful home, you would not be afraid to go ? ”

“ Afraid ? No, Cousin Helen, not that ; but I have only learned to love God lately, and I have done so little for him. I hoped I could do so much ; but if he wants

me I am willing to go. You will stay with me until he sends for me; and then, you know, it will be all right?"

"Yes, dear; I will be with you as long as you need me."

"Dear father! Do you think it would make heaven seem more like home to him to have his little Bessie there waiting to welcome him? I heard one of the doctors say something about my not being able to walk if I got well. Cousin Helen, I would not mind that for myself; for I would try to live like Mrs. Duncan, and make every one else so happy that I would forget all about myself; but poor mamma could not stand it, you know. She can't bear to have any one sick about her, and I heard her say once she could not live in the house with any one like Mrs. Duncan. When Mrs. Duncan was talking the other night about the whole world being better because some people had lived in it, I thought of you, and wondered if I would ever be able to help so many people, and make them love me, as you have. I can't now, you know; but you will tell father and mother that I was glad to go, if God wanted me."

"I trust God will spare you to us all a long time yet."

"I am hurt in so many places, I don't see how I can get well. I thought I was dying once, before they brought me here; but you seemed to speak to me and call me back."

"And you're better now," said Helen, cheerfully.

"It's all coming back," said Bessie. "I can feel it, and—I want to see Tom first."

Helen started to get up, but Bessie's little hand clutched her, as she said :

“Don’t leave me. Call, and she’ll come.”

It was not necessary to do that, however; for Miss Harlan opened the door, and knew in a moment that they wanted her.

“Find Tom, her brother, please,” said Helen.

The scene that followed was one Helen never forgot; the brother and sister each trying to be brave and cheerful for the sake of the other, and Bessie talking so sweetly to the brother she loved. At last, speaking in a lower tone, she said :

“You know how Cousin Helen tried to save me. Tell father, from me, that I would like him to care for her always, for my sake.”

“All right, and I say, Bessie, I ain’t much more than a boy; but I promise you she shall be taken care of, some way. Perhaps you and I can do it together, you know.”

For a moment Bessie’s face brightened, and then she said :

“I am afraid not. It’s all coming back again, and I could not stand it long, you know.” Turning to the nurse she said, a little anxiously, “You will not take cousin Helen away? I want her right here by my side, and if I don’t know anything else, I shall know if you take her away.”

Miss Harlan promised that she should remain, and then there was a gasp, a spasm, and for hours it seemed

as though an angel was ready at any moment to carry off the spirit of the little sufferer. Then followed a long night of anxious watching and waiting. Neither Dr. Taylor nor Mr. Duncan left the house, and Helen could not be persuaded to leave Bessie's side. They brought her food and nourishment, and bathed and dressed her aching hands and arms, but she would take nothing to induce sleep. She must have every sense alert and be ready for what might come. At times, Bessie would be conscious and know them; but it would not be long, and she would always ask Helen not to leave her, and would seem to find rest and comfort in having her hand on her cousin's face. Helen lay with her face very close to the child's; and when, in her unconsciousness, she would moan more piteously than usual, Helen would call her softly by name, and the little hand would go up in a helpless way. At such times, either the doctor or nurse would lay it gently on Helen's face, and the moans would cease as Helen spoke in a low tone words that seemed, in some strange way, to reach and soothe the child as nothing else could. Helen knew that if Bessie lived till morning, the worst danger would be passed, and gladly she hailed the first signs of dawn, feeling more hopeful than she had done, and when Tom came to the bed, and burying his head by her side, groaned aloud, she spoke words of hope and comfort that went to his heart, which was so full he could not quite keep back a broken-hearted sob. The sick child was just gaining consciousness, and heard him.

“Tom,” she said, looking around for him.

Instantly he was himself again, and had gone to her side.

“Do you want anything, Bessie?” he asked.

“Don’t cry any more,” she said, as he lightly, lovingly let his hand rest on her head. “I think God’s not going to take me away from you just yet.”

Tom tried to speak, but could not, and only leaned over and kissed her.

“If I’m sick and can’t walk for a long, long time, you won’t mind, like mamma would, Tom?”

“Mind,” said Tom, slowly, “I’ll only mind when you let some one else carry you around, and when I think you are afraid to let me know you want anything I can do for you. I say, Bessie, I don’t want you to forget that you have a brother who loves you.”

“Thank you, Tom. I didn’t quite know—whether you would mind—you know. It rests me now, and if I could sleep a little, I might feel better.”

A moment later the doctor was by her side with a sleeping draught, and said :

“If you will take this now, I think you will sleep quietly, and perhaps Cousin Helen will take some too.”

“You won’t take her away?” she asked, putting out her hand, as though she would detain her.

“No, she can sleep just where she is for the present.”

“She makes it easier for me to bear the pain, when it comes,” explained the child, and she took the medicine,

saying, afterward: "Cousin Helen, I am glad you can sleep too."

The tears were rolling down Helen's face, which she tried to hide. The nurse, Miss Harlan, came to her aid and whispered words of hope. Hope! With what joy that word came to the household later in the day, when the three physicians had been in consultation again. Mrs. Belvin refused to take the responsibility of anything, and Helen, disabled as she was, found it necessary to constitute herself the head of the house, Mr. Duncan and Tom volunteering to assist her as far as they could. The former offered to write at once to Europe, and to do so in a way that would alarm them as little as possible; for the doctor had said it was very important that Mr. Carter should not think of returning at present. If Helen thought she could stand the pain, he would prefer having the child under her care for a time, as she seemed to have such a wonderful influence over her.

"The first thing for me to do to-day," said Mr. Duncan to Helen, "is to find a maid for you. You will need one to wait on you for some time, now."

"Do you think so?" she said, regretfully. "I would so much rather not. I am not used to such things, and have never had any one to wait on me but my old Mammy Tot."

"The very one!" said Mr. Duncan, quickly. "I'm glad you mentioned her. I will send for her at once."

Helen looked up so surprised that she could not say anything, and her companion asked:

"You would like to have her? She would be a comfort to you?"

"Oh, yes; but——

"No buts," said Mr. Duncan, who saw in a moment that the old woman was the one to have. "If you want her she shall come."

"She might not be able to leave her family," said Helen, hesitatingly.

"Don't be afraid of that. She commissioned me to be sure and send for her, if you needed her, and I can't let her reproach me some day when she finds this out."

"You won't frighten John? I can get Tom to write to him for me."

"Trust me there, Miss Helen, and leave as much else to me as you can. Your uncle left you in my care, and I intend it shall be good care. Don't worry over Mrs. Belvin. She has had a singular life, and acts a little peculiarly at times; but I know something about her, and feel sure that in a few days she will take all the household cares on herself; but I doubt if she will have anything to do in the sick room."

It proved to be as he had said; and it was a great help to Helen when she did take some things into her own hands. Then came Mammy Tot. Helen put her head on the old woman's shoulder and wept as she had not done before.

"Dat 'll do yer heaps o' good, honey," said the old woman, reassuringly, "an' yer kin do de same ting wen-

somewer yer's a mind; like yer 's de ever wee mite ob de little chile wot I's toted roun' many 's de time."

To Bessie, Mammy Tot proved a source of constant pleasure. There were times when she could interest her in outside matters, and often then she would get the old woman to tell something of her Southern life in her quaint, odd way, and if she could have Helen and Tom both with her then, she was very happy.

"An' I's proud ter wait on any o' my young missus' kin," said the old woman on one occasion; "ef it ain't aben fur 'er I reckin I neber would a keered en de right way 'bout de kingdom."

"Did she teach you to love God, too?" asked Bessie, with some interest.

"Not zactly dat, honey, but she done tole me dat he ain't way off dar somewar when I's prayin', but dat ef I kin see troo de vail, I gwine fine 'im right dar by my side, same's ef I kin rech out my han' and tech 'em. Dat how she done holp me ter fine 'em 'out gwine way off dar whar I done know nuffin 'bout de place. Lor, honey, dat done me a heap o' good, an' holp me wid de little tings dat I's a tinkin befo' ain't gwine ter make no manner o' difference ter him, when he 's so fur away."

"I think it is so lovely, too, to feel that he can care for and protect us at any moment, and that he does it when we know nothing of the danger ourselves. Mammy Tot, Cousin Helen helps so many people to know about it in a way they never did before. I think it is because they can't help seeing she is all in earnest. She talks

as though she knew everything she said was just so, because she had tried it, and she talks to God so beautifully. It don't seem to me that God can help answering her prayers, for she asks as though she knew he would, if it was best."

CHAPTER XXIII.

TRYING FOR REST.

THE first month of Bessie's sufferings was a sad, weary time for all who were with her ; for it was hard to see her suffer, and it was pitiful to see the effort she made to repress her feelings, that Tom and Helen might not know how great the trouble was. But they knew more than she suspected, and it was an experience that brought out some of Tom's fine qualities. He had grown up with feelings that were perhaps more thoughtless than selfish, but that had threatened, in time, to become the latter. Now there was a decided change, and Helen and Bessie knew that they were the first thought with him. The affection between the brother and sister grew very strong, and showed itself in many little ways that were not to be forgotten. Tom always went at once to the sick room when he came into the house. If it was one of her good times, as she called them, Bessie would say :

“ All right, Tom,” and he would go in, with some funny remark, and sit by her side and tell of something he had seen or heard that would make her laugh and forget herself. But for several weeks these were exceptional times, and more often he was greeted by an attempt at a smile that would cause him to approach the bed very quietly and kneel by the side of it with words very different

from those used during the "good times." Bessie looked forward to his coming in either case, and there were some things she would never allow any one else do for her.

"I think Tom would like it," she said to Helen once, and Helen had understood and encouraged the feeling; and Tom had liked it, and when she had once or twice sent for him in the night, he had loved her all the more, and had told her so.

Bravely as Helen had borne her own sufferings at first, during the shock and excitement, there had come a time when she could control herself no longer, and when for two days she had lain by Bessie's side almost as helpless as the child herself. Besides the sprains she had received, there had been bruises and strains in other places besides her hands and arms, and it was thought quite wonderful by some that she had not been killed by the violence with which she had been wrenched from the ground and thrown back again. During this time, Mammy Tot was a great comfort to her, waiting on her and encouraging her in a way that reminded her of her childhood. As she grew better, it was a great trial to her not to be able to wait on Bessie; but her presence and kind, loving words were very grateful to the child who could still scarcely bear to have her out of her sight; and yet there were times when she had suffered more or longer than usual, when she would say :

"Cousin Helen, will you please go away and lie down where you can rest? Tom is with me now, and it'll be all right. I'd like it so much if you would."

The first time this happened, Helen had left the room, but finding something that needed attention, had occupied herself with it. Bessie found it out, and her disappointment was so great that the next time Bessie asked her to go, she did as the child wished, and was surprised to find how much fresher and brighter she felt Bessie saw it too, and would repeat the request whenever she thought Helen was not feeling so well as usual.

"I can see it in your eyes," she would say, "though you try your best to hide it."

During this time there were many expressions of sympathy and many dainty, delicate things in the way of flowers and fruit sent to the house.

"I don't see what does make people so kind to me," said Bessie one day, when Tom had brought up stairs with him a basket of fruit that had just arrived. "Do you know, I like the things Mr. Edmands sends better than any others, because he always has something for Cousin Helen, if it's only a single flower, all by itself. He seems to know just what we like best; and yesterday he sent the dearest little note, all to me that was, with a message for Cousin Helen."

Helen, too, thought Mr. Edmands knew just what to send and how and when to do it; and though she did not see any one who came to the house except Mr. Duncan and Mr. Keener, who came very regularly to inquire, and who were allowed at times to see Bessie herself for a few moments, she soon got into the habit of going down stairs to see Mr. Edmands when he came Sunday after-

noons to inquire for Bessie. It was several weeks after the accident before she did see him, and then Bessie had begged her to do so, and to thank him herself for the things he had sent. After that, it became a regular thing for her to see him at that time, if Bessie was able to do without her. One afternoon, when she had greeted him, she said :

“I am sorry I cannot leave Bessie to-day ; but she is suffering more than usual. Would you mind, very much, doing something that I think might help her ? ”

“Certainly not, if it is anything I can do.”

“She is very fond of music, and once or twice I have found that singing softly would soothe her. I thought to-day, if you would try the organ, perhaps it would help her. I will leave the doors open so that she can hear.”

It was late in the afternoon, and the shadows in Bessie’s room were crowding out the light when she first heard the organ. Helen was lying by her side, as she always did when she was suffering, and she could just see the change in her face as it lighted up and she asked :

“Who is it ? ” Then quickly added, “Mr. Edmands ? ”

“Yes, dear. Do you like it ? ”

“Oh, so much ! Listen ! ”

For a long time she lay perfectly still, absorbed in the music ; and then came the words of that beautiful hymn, “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me,” when she started and seemed to listen as though she was afraid of losing a note. When it was over, she called Tom and asked him if he

would go down and thank Mr. Edmands before he left, and tell him how much good the music had done her.

"It rests me so," she said.

When Tom did go down, he said, in his abrupt way;

"If you'd been up stairs when you first came and could go there now, you'd know something of the good you've done. Bessie had one of her attacks that would have lasted till bed time, partly nervous, you know; but now she'll go to sleep and will be all right when she wakes. She told me I was to thank you and to tell you it rested her; but I don't know how else to do it."

"The thanks are due to your cousin, Tom. She suggested it."

Tom's eyes sparkled as he said:

"Well, I say, now, did you ever meet any one who knew as she does how to—— to ease other people's burdens? I was thinking about it to-day, and I just came to the conclusion it was because she lives so close to God, she can't help it."

"How do you mean, Tom?"

"I mean that she does live nearer to God than some of us. You can't help feeling it after seeing her as I've done lately. To hear her pray! I've heard her twice, and it was just as though she was talking to some one in the room with her—some one whom she loved and trusted. I shan't forget it in a hurry. I've written her letters for her lately, and I've found out a good deal about her that way that I would not otherwise have known. She has a kind of sister who's not a sister; but

she writes her the most beautiful letters! They do me good, if they don't her. I tell you there's something about Helen that makes you want to be better and better, the longer you live with her."

This letter writing was particularly pleasant to Tom. It seemed to show him a little of her home life; for the letters to John were sent very often, and sometimes in the return letters there would be enclosed a note for him, or one for Bessie. When the time came that Helen could do her own letter writing he really missed his former occupation, and found himself asking innumerable questions about people and things. To his delight, he found an ever ready listener in Mammy Tot, who delighted in telling him of the Southern home and of "ole Missus' family."

When Bessie was able to be moved with any comfort to herself, a rolling chair was provided, and a day was chosen for her to try it when she was as free from suffering as she ever was now. She was to be taken into the sitting room on "the trial trip," as she called it. Helen had provided a pretty blue wrapper for the occasion, and she looked very bright and happy as she was dressed and waiting for Tom; for she would not think of starting until he came. It was quite a procession that did go then, and a merry one too; for each member was determined that Bessie should not think of the sad part of it, if it could be helped. As Mammy Tot, who headed the procession, opened the sitting-room door, Polly said, in her deepest and slowest tones; "Wa—a—lk in," add-

ing, in a moment, in high, quick notes, "How do you do?"

"Oh, how good that sounds!" cried Bessie, excitedly. "It seems almost as though nothing had happened," she added, a little more soberly.

Once in the room, she was interested in the flowers, that did seem to have grown so fast; but she found she could not stay long, and soon had to ask Tom to take her back. It was the beginning of better things, however; and when a telegram called Miss Harlan to a sick sister, Helen insisted that there was no need of supplying her place, as she and Mammy Tot could do all that was necessary, with the help of Tom, and occasionally Mrs. Belvin, who found her rheumatism less trying and exacting as spring approached.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A VISIT FROM MRS. DUNCAN.

ONCE able to leave her room, it seemed as though Bessie had made a rapid stride toward recovery; but there were trying days to follow, when pain and suffering would return, and sadden the hearts of those about her. Helen's eyes would often fill with tears as she compared the white, delicate-looking child with the rosy, healthy little thing who greeted her so sweetly the night of her arrival. It would be a long time yet before she could put her feet to the ground, and Bessie knew it, but never once did she murmur; and on one occasion when she was suffering, and Tom made a hasty remark that he did not seem able to repress, she looked up and said, earnestly:

"Don't, Tom. God is taking care of me, and he loves me. He will not let me suffer more than is best."

As spring approached, and the physicians decided that Bessie must leave the city as early as possible, Helen turned at once to Mr. Duncan for help. He had settled many a vexed question for her before, and she felt sure he would this. But it was no easy task to find a place that would just suit the child; for they had no desire to go to a regular summer resort, and yet she must be where she could have the same comforts as at home. For

several weeks Mrs. Duncan was busy corresponding in regard to places of which she would hear, and some of which her son would go and examine for himself; but nowhere had they come across just what they wanted when Mrs. Duncan remarked, one day:

“Suppose we try to find some private place somewhere for rent. I think it would be better for them all, if they could have something of that kind. You might advertise——”

“No need for that,” said her son, rising quickly. “I know the very place. Cheston Demming told me to-day that he was preparing to go abroad, and wished I’d rent his place, and take you up there for the summer—said he would rent low for the sake of having it well taken care of. It was stupid in me not to think of this. It’s the very place. If we hunted a month longer, we could not get a better—cool, fine scenery, every convenience, and charming neighbors. I’ll hurry off and catch him before his train leaves. Good-bye.”

Helen’s surprise was great when she heard that Mr. Duncan had rented a country place for them. At first, she hardly knew whether to be pleased or not, fearing that her uncle might not approve of their incurring such an expense.

“Don’t worry over that,” said Mr. Duncan, when she mentioned it. “I intend to make this a joint affair, so that you and I will have as much interest there as your uncle, or any of his family. I want a place where I can go to spend the night, or bring a few friends and stay

several days. I could not select a place that would suit better; and toward fall, when my mother has been to see her niece, I shall want to take her there. You are to have the same right as I, and can send for your brother and a half-dozen other members of your family, if you wish, to spend the summer with you. I'll see Mrs. Belvin about the housekeeping. She shall have charge of it, and shall be head of the house in that way, just as she is here. I'm not sure but it is a pretty good thing for that rheumatism."

Bessie was delighted at the idea of having a whole house to themselves, and horses and a carriage.

"Won't it be lovely!" she exclaimed. "Oh, I'm sure I will get well fast there. I wish papa was getting well faster."

The last letters they had received had been rather discouraging; for Mr. Carter, after having grown better at first, had suddenly grown worse, and the physicians had ordered him elsewhere, and said he must not venture to return home for several months. He had written to them regularly himself until the last week, when he had dictated a letter; but it was a very bright one, full of hope for the future, and of loving messages for the dear ones at home. He had never been allowed to know the extent of Bessie's injury, and no one would have dreamed, from the pleasant letters that were sent across the ocean, that there had been any serious trouble at home.

Bessie saw more people now, and was very much interested in the preparations for their departure for the sum-

mer. She wanted to know everything that was being done, and would suggest things herself that she thought would benefit them all. To her great delight, the week before they were to leave, Mrs. Duncan came and spent the day with her. It was never until the clear, mild days of spring came that she dared venture out of the house, and this time her first outing had been to visit Bessie. To the child it was a rare treat; for she felt that here was one who knew what she had been, and still was, going through.

"It is not quite so bad for me as it is for you," said Bessie, "because they tell me I need only have a little patience and I can walk again as I used to do."

"You won't think it hard some day when you look back on it, dear. You'll see then how it has helped you and others. Perhaps I could point out something of that myself for you now. Have not you and Tom been brought nearer together?"

"Oh, yes," said the child, as the tears came into her eyes, "and it is so nice. I can't thank God enough for that. You see we did always love each other some, but we didn't think so. Cousin Helen says it was because we never talked about it and told each other so; but we do now, and it is so good. I believe Cousin Helen was right."

"I am quite sure she was, my dear; for there are many, many persons who lose a great deal of happiness from just that cause. They do not think it necessary to tell people they love that they care for them, and they neglect little things that would show it in other ways. Somehow the

world seems to be full of happiness that is deliberately pushed aside to make room for misunderstandings and discomfort. We don't recognize it when it is within our grasp. We all have hard lessons to learn, murmuring often over fancied troubles and inviting great ones. As for me, Bessie, I would not now change my condition for yours, because I know it is best for me as it is; and yet when my trouble first came I complained and rebelled, declaring I would rather die than live, and praying God to take me where there was no such trouble. I thank God now that he was merciful enough not to answer that prayer, but to let me live to show him that I repented and was willing to live in any way he thought best. You have patiently accepted his will from the first and——”

“I never would have been able to do that if Cousin Helen had not lived with us this winter and taught me how. She lives so that you can't help feeling that she knows what she talks about. It always did me good to have her near me when I was suffering. Do you suppose I could ever help any one as she helped me?”

“Begin with the little things, the small, every-day things, and you need not fear for anything else.”

“I think that is one way in which Cousin Helen does so much for people. She always finds something, if it's ever so little, that she can say or do for them. I've seen her look at people in a way that would give them courage to do something unpleasant. Mrs. Duncan, don't you think when people live in that way and you know their

lives are true, honest ones, that they help everybody about them to be better?"

"Yes, dear, we all exert an influence for either good or bad upon those with whom we come in contact."

"I used to think that was dreadful, for it seemed to me we must help others to do so much that is wrong; but now I think, since I have seen how much Cousin Helen has done for others, without knowing it, that it is a grand and beautiful thing."

CHAPTER XXV.

SURPRISES.

“ **W**ELL, Miss Helen, now we are ready for guests, whom do you expect to entertain first?”

It was Mr. Duncan who spoke, and they had been a week in their country home. Bessie had stood the journey as well as they could expect ; but had been confined to her bed for two days after. Now, however, she was able to be moved about, and thoroughly enjoyed being rolled from room to room examining the views from each, or being taken to the broad veranda, which extended around two sides of the house, where she could sit in the sun, and where “ Polly and I can take in the fresh air and enjoy the beautiful view,” she would say. Already she was beginning to improve, they thought, and they were very hopeful ; the physicians assuring them that much depended now on her general health and the rapidity with which she gained strength. She must have pleasant society, Mr. Duncan thought, and had done what he could for them in the neighborhood. It was this that caused him to question Helen about her visitors ; but her answer was such that he said, in some surprise :

“ I thought you understood that you had a right to invite whom you chose,—just as much right as I. You know how I get my right ? ”

"Yes, Mr. Duncan, I know that you kindly arranged to bear part of the expenses."

"And that gives me some rights here, does it not?"

"Of course it does."

"Well, you have the same rights, obtained in the same way."

"I!" she exclaimed, looking at him questioningly.

"Yes, you. Part of the expenses here are paid in your name."

"You ought not to do that," she said, shaking her head, soberly.

"I don't do it, Miss Helen; but it is done by one who intended that you should feel at liberty to have any of your family with you this summer, or any one else you wished, and who would be disappointed if you did not show your appreciation of the thought by taking advantage of it. I am thinking of sending for your brother, to look further into a matter we discussed together when he was here. I would be glad, of course, to have him for a guest of my own; but I thought you might like him yourself. How is it?"

There were tears in Helen's eyes as she tried to speak, but could not.

"You must thank the person for me who has done this," she said, at last. "I am afraid, though, John could not come on now, for Aunt Han is very ill, and he would not leave home until she is better."

"Then you must think of some one else, for we do not intend that he should be the only one sent for."

"I think it would be very pleasant if Margaret Parker could come."

"That's good. Now remember, if there is any one else, all you have to do is to send for that person, be it man, woman, or child."

That was the beginning of a summer full of pleasant, and some strange and unexpected events. Margaret Parker was more than glad to be once more with Helen, and became a member of the household for a part of the summer. Mr. Duncan brought with him, from time to time, people who could interest and amuse the invalid, as well as enjoy the country life. The two who came most frequently were Mr. Keener and Mr. Edmands. It was a pleasure to Bessie to see the latter, who had shown so much sympathy for her since she had been sick. After his first attempt to soothe her at the organ, he had often come to the house about that same time in the evening, and, without announcing his presence, had gone to the organ and had played that grand old music that cannot but be restful to the weary, either in body or mind. Now, it was so pleasant to listen to his music, as they sat outside with so many of God's wonderful works around them.

"It sounds, sometimes, as though the music must come right from heaven," Bessie said, on one occasion, when she was even more impressed than usual.

There were others who came to Morelands and spent a few days; a young man who had been one of Helen's drawing teachers, but whose health was not of the best;

the girl whom John had visited with Helen, and who, with her father, would have been able to take no holiday for the summer had it not been for this; and numbers of others, who owed to Helen the only outing they had. There were many pleasant visits from people in the neighborhood, some of which, occasionally, Bessie, to her great delight, was able to return.

At last John came, dear John, who was so welcome and had such strange things to tell. First came Aunt Han's sickness and death. Yes; she had gone to join those whom she loved, and who had preceded her into a world without sorrow or sin. To the surprise of every one, it was found that she had left considerable property. Half of it was left outright to her nephew John, that he might be at liberty to pursue any calling he preferred. After that came a legacy to Chloe, that would support her as long as she lived. The remainder was divided equally between "Helen Carter, my niece," and "Maud Tyler, my adopted niece." A letter addressed to Helen explained this in part, telling her that her aunt had originally intended giving everything to John, knowing he would see that she was cared for; but she had changed her mind, and had determined to give her something in her own right.

"I have tried and tested you in every way," the letter said; "for, being deceived once, many years ago, I scarcely dared feel that your love for me was natural and unselfish. I have loved you more almost than I had a right to love any one human, and yet I have

treated you in a way calculated to destroy any affection you might have for me. Never once have you treated me with anything but consideration, and now, to prove my love for and perfect confidence in you, I do what the world may think strange, but what I know will please you. I divide a portion of what I leave behind between you and Maud. Like one who had made up her mind to follow cheerfully a disagreeable line of conduct, Maud came to me after you left, and tried to bring a little brightness into my life, because she thought you would like it. I knew why it was done, and she found her way to my heart better in that way than she would have done in any other ; nor did I hesitate to let her see it. Her shy, shrinking manner appealed to me, and her presence has always been a welcome one. I am now suffering from what I believe I shall never recover. I have sent for the child, and will keep her with me to the end, if I can. After that, I wish her to be well educated, and I think you will be glad to have me leave her the money for it. It is one of the ways in which I prove my love for you, and I think you will understand. It will make her feel a little more comfortable and independent to know it is her own money, and not yours and John's, that is being used. Try to remember Aunt Han kindly, and to feel that through everything, and in spite of her apparent harshness, she loved you very, very dearly, and at this moment she would give much to be able to take you in her arms and tell you so. She has missed you more than she can tell, or than you can ever dream of.

The winter has been very lonely without your dear face to look upon, but John and Maud have done all they could to make up for your absence. Watch over Maud, and continue to help her, as you have done, for she has the making of a fine woman, and is willing to be guided by you."

The letter ended with a loving leave-taking, "for a little while," it said, and then a prayer that the God she loved would keep her niece from harm, and help her to remain pure and unspotted from the world.

This letter was a surprise and comfort to Helen, who appreciated the trust and confidence her aunt had shown in her. It was a great pleasure to her to know that Maud shared with her a portion of what her aunt had left. It was now that John told her the name of the fairy godmother, and it was to her she attributed at once her present position as hostess. To her surprise, however, she found she was wrong; nor did she find out to whom she was indebted for that. Only Mr. Duncan and his mother knew, and they kept the knowledge to themselves. In discussing it, at the close of the summer, Mrs. Duncan told her son that she considered it one of the finest investments she had ever made.

John had other strange news to tell. Mrs. Carter's mother had died, and she had decided to go West and live with her father.

"Weeping bitterly," said John, "Maud begged me to let her stay somewhere near us. She is anxious to study; but does not want to be so far away from a cer-

tain little sister of mine that she cannot reasonably expect to see her occasionally. She thinks if she ever amounts to anything—and she has firmly made up her mind that she will, if she has to fight for it—it will all have been started by you, dear. This is one thing that has brought me on just now, Nell. I wanted to talk with you before deciding on anything definite."

They did talk the matter over carefully, deciding, in the end, that Maud should come and spend the rest of the summer at Morelands, and that John should accept an offer he had received for renting the farm, and should at once take up the work he preferred. When fall came, they hoped to be together somewhere.

"To think, John," said Helen, "that my prayer should have been answered in such an unexpected way. I have prayed earnestly that God would show you some way in which you could give up the farm, and do this. I felt sure that he would do it some time, though I could not tell how. I don't know how to thank him enough."

After more discussion of the subject, Helen asked, suddenly :

"John dear, don't you ever think about getting married?"

"Why, what has put such a thing as that into your head?" he asked, putting his arm round her and looking at her a little curiously. "I have never been in a position yet when I could think much about it."

"But if you were, John, and if you found some one you could care for in that way?"

"Then I suppose I should think of it very seriously," he said, half laughing.

"And I think you would be very happy," she said, soberly, though she tried to speak lightly.

"That would depend very much upon how we suited each other. I might get hold of a terrible temper, or——"

"Oh, stop, John, don't talk so. You know you would never choose any one like that. I am sure you would only like a good——"

"Well, dear, there is plenty of time yet to think about it. I suppose all men think of it some time in their lives, and look forward to it as a thing to be hoped for in the future; but with me, it has been such a vague thought, that it has never taken very definite shape. Should it ever do so, and should the dear Lord see fit to give me so great a blessing as a true, noble wife to share my joys and sorrows, would my little sister be ready to help me to make her happy?"

He was holding her two hands now and looking earnestly into her face.

"Yes, John, with all her heart," she said, emphatically, remembering the years he had given up to others. "And," lowering her eyes now to hide the tears she felt were coming, "I shall pray God to make that too, possible for you."

He folded her in his arms, not quite understanding her mood, but feeling that in some way she was gaining a victory over self.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SHARING WITH OTHERS.

MAUD had arrived—a tall, awkward, ungainly girl, never at her ease unless Helen was present, or unless she could be doing something for Bessie, who won her sympathy at once.

“I say, Cousin Helen,” said Tom,—“Bother, I did not mean to say that; but I say, she’s pretty homely, and she’s awkward, and all that; but there is something about her I like, and I mean to do all I can to help her get over her—bashfulness, you know, and to bring out what there is in her, to make people like her. It must be pretty bad, you know, to feel sure you are not so good-looking as most people, and all that. If you think of anything I can do, or that you would like me to do, just say the word.”

“Thank you, Tom. I am sure you can help her in many ways to forget herself; and that will be a great thing for her.”

“Then I’ll try, and I say—there it is again—but, I say, I think there are other things I can do too.”

Tom did try, and so did Bessie, to make Maud feel at ease, and they succeeded even better than they hoped, so that they were soon on a friendly footing, and found many things in which they could take a common interest.

Bessie was delighted with the barnyard and life there, which was new to her. To Maud it was familiar, and she found great pleasure in telling Bessie what she knew about it.

“I wish,” said Bessie, on one of these occasions, “that there was some way we could let the children who never see anything of this kind take a peep at it.”

They were at the back of the house, on a part of the lawn where they could see into the barnyard, where chickens, ducks and turkeys were busy hunting for food. Near the fence stood a peacock with ruffled neck and spread tail, and in the distance, rubbing down his horses, was the coachman, who always talked to the dumb beasts he cared for as though they were children.

“That’s the way he teaches them to know him,” explained Bessie to Maud, “and then they can always trust him, you see; and they are never afraid of anything when he is with them. Just as it is with us, you know, when we are willing to trust God in everything. We know that he won’t ask us to do what we can’t do; and with him near us there is nothing to fear.”

To Polly’s great delight, she was allowed, at times, to have all the liberty she wished. Some of her feathers had been plucked to prevent her flying; but she could climb, and she took advantage of it, going sometimes to the very roof of the house, and calling back in her own peculiar way. On this occasion she had taken her position on the edge of one of the chimneys, and was laugh-



ing and talking in a most animated way, thoroughly enjoying the situation.

"It seems to me, sometimes," said Bessie, "that I have so many more blessings than some other children."

"Now, when you can't walk?" asked Maud, looking at her curiously.

"Yes, Maud. Just think of all the children in the hospitals who can't be out in this beautiful sunshine, with so much to make them forget themselves. They are the ones I was thinking of when I said I wished they could see some of this. There is so much here, that we might divide it up and give a little corner of it to one hospital and another corner to another hospital, and keep on that way till ever so many children had found some of it; and then you know there are other places like this that could be divided up, and then the hospitals could exchange——"

"Why, Bessie," laughed Helen, who was making a sketch of the peacock, "do you imagine yourself living in days of fairies and magicians?"

"No, Cousin Helen; only I do wish I could in some way share this with others. If I could only tell them about it, now I have seen it."

"Perhaps we can," said Helen, rising, as a sudden thought struck her.

"I wonder what she means?" said Bessie, when Helen had disappeared.

"It'll be something to please somebody, I know," said Maud; "but I wonder too, what it is."

When she returned she was carrying an easel, and Mammy Tot had a large drawing board, on which was fastened some drawing paper. She planted her easel where the two girls could watch her at work, and then smiling at them said :

“See who can tell first what I am doing.”

For a while neither of the girls said anything, and then Bessie cried suddenly :

“It’s the house.”

“No,” said Maud, thoughtfully, “it’s too large. She could not get it on the paper. I believe it’s part of the house, though. Yes, it’s going to be this end of it. What is it for, sister?”

“How do you think it would do to send it to one of the hospitals? You see I am making it large, so that the children can see it at a distance.”

For a moment neither of the girls spoke, and then Bessie said, wonderingly :

“I don’t see why you do the house, Cousin Helen. They have all seen houses; but there are so many things here they have not seen.”

“So you think they won’t care for it. Just wait and see. In the first place there is a word picture that must go with this, and I expect one of you to supply it.”

“That will be nice,” said Bessie, “and Maud must do it. She does tell the loveliest stories, and the funniest ones I almost ever heard. That will be splendid.”

“Oh, Bessie, don’t,” said Maud, in a distressed tone; “you know I could not do that. I’ve never been to school

much, and I don't know how to do such things like girls who have."

"That don't make a bit of difference. When I was sick, it was good to have the least little thing done to show that people wanted to make it easier for me to forget the pain. Just write down some of the things you have told me. And I am sure there will be lots of sick children who will enjoy it, whether it is written right or not."

"But I don't know what to say."

"You will when you think a little. Oh, do look; Cousin Helen is putting Polly on the chimney. I believe that is what she did the house for. It was to give a chance to show Polly in one of her funny positions. Dear old Polly! Of course, it won't do to neglect her. Now you can find plenty to say."

To the surprise of both Helen and Bessie, Maud covered her face with her hands and began to sob. Rising instantly from her seat, Helen went to her and tried to soothe her, asking her, as she did so, what had hurt or wounded her.

"It isn't anything of that kind," said Maud, at last, looking up through her tears. "I think it's because I'm glad. I hardly know just what it is. Perhaps you can tell me." And then in her own trustful way she told Helen that "ever since Aunt Han had left the money to educate her, she had prayed God to help her in such a way that some day she could write stories and things that people would like to read. You see, I could

not help feeling just now that perhaps he was going to begin answering my prayer already. If I could write something now that children who have not had much education like me would like, would it not be splendid? Would not God be good to let me do it? You know, sister, I never can be pretty and look like most girls that people like to have about; so I have asked God to let me do things that will help people and make them glad to know me; and I have asked him to help me do them, so that it shall all be to his glory. Sister, do you think it would be wrong for me to ask if I might grow up with an intelligent looking face?"

"Are you still worrying over your looks, dear? Then let me tell you how you can grow up with a face such as I would prefer to all others. Live so near to Christ that people cannot help seeing the reflected glory. You remember how Moses' face shone when he came down from the mountain. So can the faces of Christians take on that look that is found nowhere else. Do you know what I mean, Maud? Did you ever see such a face?"

"Yes, sister."

"And you like to look at it?"

"Yes."

"Mrs. Duncan's face is like that," said Bessie. "You could not look at it without knowing she lived very close to God."

"It seemed to me people must have something attractive about their faces first," said Maud.

"God's impress beautifies everything. Ask him for that, dear, and you need not worry about your looks any more. Leave all that to him."

"Cousin Helen," said Bessie, "do you think anything is too small for us to pray about?"

"No; everything that comes to us, great or small, God knows about. I remember once, when I was saying I thought something too insignificant to talk to God about, that my mother spoke in her own sweet way about it, and to convince me she understood just what it was, she told me that she had been brought up with so many people to wait on her that she felt she need never do anything she did not care for; and among other things she never learned to sew as girls do now. When the war was over and all the slaves were gone, she found it necessary to know more; and she did try, but nothing would look right. She would put things together, but they would be so different from what she expected and wanted that she would often sit down and cry about it. She would not tell her father, because he had enough to worry over without that; but at last she took it to the Lord and made it a special subject of prayer. And God answered her prayer, so that she soon found things would fit together and look right in a way that made her very happy. Before she died she was a beautiful seamstress; but she said she never would have been if she had not gone to the Lord and asked his help. It is by talking to the Lord about the little things that vex us that we learn to know him and to put our trust in him."

Helen had gone back to her drawing now, and as she worked on Polly, she called up to her and said:

“Come Polly, come down, pretty Polly!”

“Polly wants coffee,” was the reply; and then she burst out laughing as though she knew how funny it all was.

The girls began to laugh too, when she whistled for the dog, a little skye terrier, which rushed frantically about trying his best to find out who was calling him. At last, he seemed to understand that it was some one overhead, and began looking up at the different windows and barking little quick, short barks, as though to let it be known he heard the call but could not find it. At last, however, he discovered Polly; and then followed a frantic rushing round and round, and a succession of furious barks that caused Maud to pick him up and say, laughingly:

“It’s a shame for Polly to tease Tatters so.”

But the dog would not be quieted until Polly stopped whistling and burst out in one of her hearty, infectious laughs. She was destined to give more trouble before the day was over, for no persuasions could induce her to come down from her exalted position. She will get hungry, they thought, and come down for something to eat. But no. She called constantly for crackers and coffee, but would not come down when they were held temptingly below.

“Cousin Helen,” said Bessie, “I am really afraid she will stay there all night.”

"I think she will come down for Tom. He can try, at any rate, when he comes home."

He was told about her when he did come, and they were wondering just what would be the best way to persuade her to join them below, when there came a noise in the chimney that startled them all. Before they could realize what it meant, the words "How do you?" "Wa-a-lk in," sounded so natural that they were not at all surprised to see Polly herself standing before them, shaking the soot from her feathers. Such a good laugh as they had.

"To think of her really coming down the chimney and knowing in just what room to come," said Bessie. "There is something to write about now, Maud."

Maud did write about it, telling the story simply, but in a humorous way, that was quite irresistible. Tom insisted on hearing it, and told Helen afterward that he believed the children who heard it would be sure to want more. He had been told about the project for sharing some of their good things with those who could not get them as they did, and he had expressed a desire to be present when the first picture and story were presented. Bessie had also told him of Maud's desire to become an author, and in speaking to Helen of it, he said:

"I don't see anything to prevent it, if she lives, for God has promised to help just such people. It's like my wanting to be a physician. I love it, and I am willing to work hard. Of course, I know something may hap-

pen to make it best that I should do something else, as it was with John; but I think I can leave all that with God now, feeling that if it is right I shall have his help to make me succeed. Do you know that since Bessie has been sick, I have decided that I would like to make just such cases as hers a study?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

A CALL FOR MAMMY TOT.

HELEN'S sketch, accompanied by Maud's story, was taken to one of the hospitals by Mr. Keener, accompanied by Tom, who returned with an enthusiastic account of the reception of both. Maud sat open-eyed, and listened as he told of one child who had a parrot at home, and who had clapped her hands when she saw this one; had cried out: "Pretty Poll! Pretty Poll!" as though she expected to be answered. She had laughed until she cried over Polly's escapade, and one little girl who had been suffering for a long time, was so pleased that she asked them to come again. She was scarcely able to smile, but she said it made her forget about the pain for a little while. Mr. Keener, before showing the picture or reading the story, had given the children, who were able to enjoy them, a little sketch of Morelands, and the people who were living there, and one little girl said she had often been there, when her father was a gardener on the next place. Before Mr. Keener and Tom left, they had been asked many times if they would not come again, and bring another picture and story. One wanted a picture of one thing, and one of another; and just as they were leaving, one of the nurses said there was a patient who wished to

speak to them. It proved to be one of the older girls.

“She looked as though she had been very ill,” Tom said; “but her eyes were bright, and her light, tousled hair was just tumbling round as though it liked it. She said her mother had lived in the South when she was a little girl, and had an old colored mammy that she used to talk about before she died. She asked if we would not some time bring a picture and story of Mammy Tot. I told her I guessed we could manage it, if Mammy Tot would agree.”

“Of course, she will,” said Bessie, at once. “Mammy Tot would do anything in the world to help any one else in trouble.”

To the surprise of every one, however, Mammy Tot looked very serious, and would not say anything until Helen asked, pleasantly:

“What is it, Mammy Tot? Don’t you like the idea?”

“Naw, miss. I’s a studyin’, an’ I’s a tinkin’ dat ef so be dat you an’ Miss Bessie kin git ’long fur a whiles, dat seems like’s ef I had oughter go an’ see dat ar sick chile.”

“That would be splendid!” cried Bessie, excitedly; “and you can see them all, and tell them some of the things you have told me. You know there are lots of children who scarcely know anything about the colored mammys of the South. Of course, Cousin Helen and I can spare you. We will just love to have you.”

This first visit started a series of weekly communica-

tions between the hospital and Morelands. There were pictures and stories with individual messages, until the children at both places felt as though they were friends. When Mammy Tot paid her visit, Helen suggested that Maud accompany her; but she said, no. She feared it might make Bessie feel it more to think she could not go.

“I would not have thought of that,” said Tom, in speaking of it to Helen; “but I have always said there was something fine underneath. Did you see how her eyes sparkled, and how her color came and went, when I was telling how her story was received the other day? She looked almost as though she might be pretty some time; and, indeed, I don’t think she is as awkward as she was. I just tell you she’s made of the right kind of stuff, anyhow.”

“Thank you, Tom,” said Helen. “It has been a great pleasure to me to see how you and Bessie have helped Maud to overcome some of her awkwardness. It will be some time before it will be all gone, and I am afraid we can never expect to do anything to make her face a pretty one; but I trust she herself will so live as to make it a very interesting and attractive one. I can’t tell you how I appreciate what you and Bessie have done for her.”

“We would have been worse than brutes, if we had not done it, after all you have done for us.”

“The hospital work,” as they called it, was the source of great pleasure and interest to them all, and the visits were made sometimes by Mr. Keener, sometimes by Mr.

Duncan, and sometimes by Mr. Edmands. At times two of them, or even all of them, went together, and Bessie enjoyed the reports particularly then, for they told such different things. After one of his visits, Mr. Edmands asked leave to bring a friend to Morelands. To Helen's surprise, he proved to be a publisher who had recognized talent in her rough sketches, and had brought a little poem for her to illustrate, that he might see a carefully executed sketch, and also judge something of the amount of originality she possessed. If she was able to handle the subject as he had reason to suspect she would, there might be something good in store for her; but he would promise nothing.

"I understand," he said, "that you did not write the stories yourself."

"No; this is the author," she said, taking Maud's hand in hers, and smiling.

Maud had been listening eagerly to what he said about Helen's work, her eyes and ears open to catch everything in praise of it; but when attention was suddenly called to herself, she became embarrassed at once, and the words she heard caused her to tremble violently, and to look at Helen in an appealing way.

"Well, well," said the publisher, "I had no idea so young a brain had fashioned those tales. I tell you what, miss, if I were you, I would try to love that kind of work, and to stick to it; for I assure you there is a kind of literary merit in what you have done that is not often shown by one so young."

Helen held Maud's hand, and smiled pleasantly at her, but as soon as she could get away, the child disappeared, and Helen found her, after her visitors had left, in her own room, with a bright, happy look on her face. She threw her arms about Helen's neck, and said :

"I could not wait any longer, sister. I just had to come and thank God. To think of there really, really and truly being a hope of my ever doing such work!"

"Bessie wants to see you, and tell you how glad she is. I think she is almost as happy as you are. There were great tears of joy in her eyes just now."

"Dear, dear Bessie! Do let us go to her."

Tom too, was delighted when he had heard of the visit, and what had been said :

"I say, Maud," he said, "I am proud of you, and some day, when people are talking about you as an author, I expect to be prouder still to be able to say, I know you."

"Please don't make fun of me, now, Tom," said Maud, nervously.

"I'm not making fun. I'm in dead earnest, and Helen can tell you I have said the same thing to her before. I firmly believe what I say, Maud."

"Think of anybody being really proud to know me," laughed Maud, nervously, adding a moment later, "but I am glad you told me that, Tom, because it will help me to work harder still to try to make you proud of me."

She had hoped to begin going to school very early in

the fall ; but when John came again to Morelands, he said he had found such a pleasant place where they could be together for the winter, but that he hardly thought it best to take Maud there until they could all go, which would probably be the latter part of October, as the European party was expected to return by the middle of the month. Maud was disappointed, but she kept her feelings to herself so well that only Helen suspected them. She would not have John do so on any account, for he had done every thing he could to provide ways and means for them all to be together for the winter. He looked very happy, now that he was able to follow out a line of work and study that had all his life been very attractive to him. He and Mr. Edmands spent a week together at Morelands in September, and the week proved a very happy one for all the young people. They were always introducing surprises and pleasures of some kind, and Bessie told Helen she did not think many people had two such pleasant visitors that week as they had. While they were there, Mrs. Duncan arrived for a short visit, and Bessie was allowed to try to use her feet for the first time. She was very anxious to be able to walk when her father arrived ; but when she was told, after her first attempt, that she must wait a week, at least, before making another, she did not complain, but made some pleasant little remark to try to keep others from feeling it. Tom felt it deeply, and she knew it, but Maud could not help showing it.

“ We must not mind such a little thing,” said Bessie.

“God has taken such good care of me so far, that I know he will do what is best now.”

Patiently she waited till they would let her make the effort again, and her patience was rewarded ; for though she only took two or three steps, and had Tom’s arm around her at the time, she was told she could do a little more the next day.

“Isn’t it splendid, Tom ?” she whispered, as he carefully put her back in her rolling chair again. She had said from the first that she would like Tom to help her when she did try to walk. “He’s my brother, you know,” she would say, “and I think he would like it too.”

“Of course he would,” John said on one occasion, “and he’d be proud of it too. Tom’s a brother who would be very glad to do anything for his sister. He has traits that I admire very much, and I am glad to know him.”

“I am so glad to hear you say that,” said Bessie, with sparkling eyes. “I think he’s just one of the nicest brothers that ever lived ; but, do you know, I never would have thought so, I am afraid, if Cousin Helen had not come to live with us. She helped us to know each other.”

“You will miss her when she leaves, will you not ?” said Mr. Edmands.

“Yes, but I shall be so glad to have her with her brother again. You know it would be wicked for me to complain when I have had her so long. You don’t

know how she looked forward to going home before, and how cheerfully she gave it up when she found Tom and I needed her. Suppose she had not done it! Do you know, I sometimes think everybody grows better who lives with her; and yet she is full of life and fun. I don't know just what it is, but there is something about her that makes people ashamed to do anything mean. Did you know about our laundress?"

"No."

"Then I must tell you. I know Cousin John will like to hear it."

But before she could begin her story a messenger arrived with a note asking if Mammy Tot would go to New York at once to the hospital. After her first visit there she had gone frequently, and had become much interested in some of the patients; but the one who attracted her most was the girl whose mother had lived in the South, and who had been nursed by a colored mammy. To her, Mammy Tot told story after story of life among the cotton fields; and now that the girl had grown worse, and they feared was dying, she had asked that Mammy Tot be sent for.

"Do not think it necessary to come back here so long as she needs you," said Helen, when Mammy Tot was ready to start. "We will be more than glad to have you help another as you have helped us."

"Bress yer soul, chile, ef I ain't a tinkin' dis yer berry mawnin' dat my wuk yer mos' 'bout done fur; an' I reck'n I ain't gwine be much mo' use ter de Lawd no

how ; and yer he done call me fus' ting. Dat's de way he has o' tellin' all we dat he knows 'bout dat ting he own sef. Lor, honey, I reck'n de good Lawd gwine keep us busy 'twell he ready ter take us inter de kingdom. Ef ye'll jes' drap a line ter my ole man, an' tell 'im not ter shout so loud at de meetins now, dat he gwine furgit ter sabe de tomatuses an' sich, like he done befo' when I's away, I'm bleeged ter yer."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

KIND WORDS.

“**N**OW, Bessie, we are ready for the story of the laundress,” said John, a few hours later, when Helen was not present. Mrs. Duncan had joined the party, and so had Maud.

“Do you mean Mrs. Bagley?” asked Maud.

“Yes. When we first came here, she was a terrible scold. She hardly seemed to be able to speak pleasantly to any one. Cousin Helen used to go about the house often then, singing ‘Kind words can never die, no, never die.’ I did not know why she did it, but I have found out since. You know, every Sunday afternoon for an hour—since we have been here—Cousin Helen has given us a little Bible reading and talk, and she has always invited the servants to join us at any time. One or two commenced it, and then more of them until we had persuaded them all to come; even Mrs. Bagley, who said at first she would not do it. They were just the most interesting kind of meetings, for Cousin Helen seemed to know how to suit everybody. One afternoon I noticed she had a great deal to say about kind words, and how much they could do. It was particularly interesting that afternoon, and I sometimes think we will never, any of us, forget it. I know I never shall now; for last week Mrs.

Bagley came up stairs and started to say something, but burst out crying, and sat for a few moments with her face hidden by her apron before she could say anything at all. Then she told Cousin Helen she had come to thank her; and she told how after she was married, her husband began to drink, and she grew cross and scolded him until she got so she just scolded all the time, and it was as much as she could do to keep a place. Cousin Helen had made her feel a little uncomfortable at first, for it did not seem as though any one ought to say a harsh word when she was around. Then, she said, the afternoon we had the talk about kind words, she just made up her mind she'd try it, and see what it would do for her. She said Cousin Helen never talked about things she did not know about herself, and she knew she was sure about everything she said then. I wish you could have seen her when she told about trying kind words, instead of scolding that night. She said her husband was so surprised that he stayed at home to see what it meant, and the next morning he told her if she would keep it up, that he would promise to stop drinking. She said they had both tried, and they had never been so happy since they had been married; but she thought it was partly because they were helping each other. Then she began to cry again, and say that it was because she didn't understand how to thank Cousin Helen, but that her husband wanted to know if he might come and see the young lady who had done so much for them. Of course, Cousin Helen said she

would be very glad to see him ; and the next day they came together, dressed in their best and looking so happy. It would have done you good to see them ; and last Sunday afternoon they came again."

" Did you know," said Maud, " that they have asked if they can go and live with us where we are going ? Mrs. Bagley says it helps people to be good to have sister look at them. She says that before she tried to stop scolding, she found somehow that the cross words would not come so fast while she was about. They were ashamed, she said."

" Would you not like to think you could do so much," said Bessie, wistfully ; " to think that the world was better for having you in it ? Mrs. Duncan, what is it that makes Cousin Helen help people, even without trying ? "

" It is the earnest, true and simple life she leads. It exerts an influence everywhere she goes, and it is an influence that never dies. You girls know something of it from what you have seen, but none of us can know all, not even she herself ; nor can we tell how it will spread and make itself felt long after we are dead."

" I was thinking about that the other day," said Maud, " and Tom said that influence never died, but went on and on forever. One can understand that about great things, but the small things, you know——"

" Are what make the great ones," said Mrs. Duncan. " It is the little, every-day worries that do more to make unhappy homes than the great troubles. If we could all

look after those, the world would be a happier place than it is. That is what Helen does. She does not wait for great things to do, but does the little ones before her, and does them with her might."

"And she never seems to know what she is doing, either," said Bessie.

"Her influence would not be so great if she was conscious of it all the time," said Mr. Edmands.

Afterward, when he was speaking of it to John alone, he said :

"It is such women who make men pause and think. It is such women who make home what God means it to be ; and it is they who make us all long for something higher and better. I was attracted by your sister the first night I met her, and I have learned to know and admire her more and more, till a great longing has come over me for a home of my own with her gentle influence around and about me. I am not as worthy of her as some men, perhaps ; but I too have felt her influence in a way that would surprise her, if she knew. I am and always shall be a better man for having known her."

"She is young yet," said John, after a moment's pause, "and I doubt if the thought of marriage has come to her."

"Nor do I intend to bring it before her at present. There is time enough for that as far as she is concerned. I am willing to wait patiently until the idea of a possibility of such a thing dawns upon her ; and then, when I think the proper time has come, I shall tell her what is

in my heart, and put my fate in her hands. I thought it would be as well for me to let you know."

"Thank you," said John, very quietly. "I suppose it will seem strange to you, but the idea of marriage as connected with her has never come to me before, and just at the moment it strikes me with a keen sense of loss. We have lived a life in our Southern home that has drawn us peculiarly close together, so that we lived, in a certain way, for each other. I think you know her well enough now to understand what I mean by that, and the thought of giving her happiness into the hands of another had not occurred to me. It is only right that it should be so, of course; and I have no hesitation in saying that I am certain she will make a wise choice. If you are that choice, I shall be ready to welcome you very cordially as a brother. She will make a wife to be proud of; and one, as you say, who will help a man to live a life he would not be ashamed to look back on at its close."

While he was speaking, he had risen and grasped his companion's hand warmly, and now abruptly turned and left him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UP AND DOWN CHRISTIAN.

MAMMY TOT did not return for several days; and when she did, the girl who had sent for her had passed away from earth and gone to join her mother in a more beautiful home beyond.

“She’s alayin’ in my arms when de good Lord sont fur ‘er,” said Mammy Tot. “An’ she jes’ say dat she dun no’ how she kin send de tanks back yere fur lettin’ on me go ober dar, when de beautiful angel come. I ain’t seen it, but she did, an’ she riz right up an’ put out ‘er weak little hans like’s ef she want ter go, an’ de beautiful angel tuk ‘em an’ den I knowed dar warn’t no mo’ pain an’ sufferin’ fur dat chile.”

“She did not suffer at the last, then?” asked Helen.

“Naw, chile. Fur nigh on t’ an hour she jes’ lay en my arms a-talkin’ ‘bout de beautiful mudder wat’s awaiten’ fur ‘er ober dar, an’ she say dat she done ask de good Lawd ter leabe ‘er ter come an’ fetch ‘er. I dunno’ef he done dat, but, howsomever she’s pleased ter go, an’ she ain’t fearin’ fur nothin’. I wish my ole man could a-seen ‘er. He’s de mos’ downsomest Christian I eber did seen.”

“Why, Mammy Tot, you were talking about his shouting so much the other day,” said Bessie.

"Dat de trouble, miss. He one o' dem up an' down Christians wot neber stay nowhar long. Time de meetins an' de tracted sarvice, he up in a balloon, seems like soarin' away high as 'e kin get; an' den he comes down all on a suddint like, an' gits down in de ditch way under de groun' som'ers whar he sins jes' kiver 'im an weigh down mighty hard. I's talked ter dat ole man time an' agin' 'bout turnin' over de burden ter him wot say he kin tote it fur 'im, but dat doan seem like's ef it make no manner o' differ, twell I jes' begun ter tink dat de time a-comin' when he ain't gwine ter be happy 'ithout de burden, an' den I take dat ting ter de Lawd an' I axes 'im ter show me de way ter holp 'im ter git shet ob it all.

"I's a-washin' one day when it come ter me, and I picks up a shirt wot's de mos' meanest-lookin' ting I eber did see. Seem's like's ef it ben in the miry clay som'ers. I jes' show dat ter my ole man an' tell 'im dat's him wen e's down all kivered over wid sin an' seems like 'e ain't neber gwine ter git shet ob it. I ain't sayin' no mo' den, but I jes take 'ticilar pains 'ith dat ar shirt an' I polish 'im up twell you kin see yer face in it good. Den I shows it ter im agin' an I says:

"'Dar yer is arter de blood o' Christ done wash yer sins away. Now wot yer got ter be moanin' an' groanin' 'bout de sins dat ain't dar. Dey's done gone away foreber an' eber, an' yer can't neber fine dem no mo' ef yer hunt long's ye lib. Yer spec dat man gwine ter moan an' groan 'bout de dirt I done tuk out o' dat ar shirt? Naw, sir; he jes know dat done gone whar he ain't neber gwine

ter see it no mo'. He kin git some mo' on dar, but dat what onct washed away ain't neber comin' back, dat's one ting sho'. Ef yer b'leive's dat yer sins am washed away by de blood ob de Lamb, den yer ain't got no call ter be down-hearted. De Book do say dat dey all blotted out an' ain't gwine be 'membered no mo' fur eber an' eber agin ye."

" Didn't that help him? " asked Bessie.

" Ya-as, miss. Seem's like's ef he's mos' light-hearted ; but dat ony 'bout a munf befo' I kum away, an' I ain't seed 'im shoutin' none since. Dey's a many tings de Lawd 'specs us ter bar wot is railly an' truly burdens an' hard ter tote ; but none on 'em ain't no sins wot's ben washed away. We's ter watch an' pray ter keep off worser sins, an' ter do de tings wot he's a callin' us ter do. I mind de time of de war, when dey's a-comin' fus' one army an' den anudder, dat one day dey comes ter de house a weak-lookin' sodjer, wot say he's a-dyin', an' kin 'e git a leetle water. Ole missus, she say dat 'e kin come in, an' den she sont fur me an' tell me ter fix de spare room de bestest I knowed how ; dat de Lawd done sent an enemy ter de house, an' we mus' kur fur 'im, same's ef he's one o' all we. Hadn't ben fur dat, he'd a-died, sho's yer bawn, but ole missus, she holp to kur fur 'im 'er ownself. She one o' dem Christians wot puts dey trust en de Lawd, an' she jes' ready ter do wot he say, matters not wot, an' she do it same 's ef she knowed it was comin' an' was a gittin' ready fur it. She warn't worryin' 'bout no sins wot's ben tuk away. She jes' hed de bestest she

got en de house gib ter dat enemy, same's ef e's a king or queen. Ef she's a moanin' and groanin' dat ar sodjer ain't gwine neber git well, dat sho? What yer spose ter come ter dis yere world ef we's all groanin' Christians? Yer tink dat gwine ter makeudder people mo' anxious ter git inter de fold? Naw, naw, dey's too much ter do, an' we can't afford ter let de good works slip, fur de Bible say: 'By dere fruits ye shall know dem.' Doan yer ebber let yerself inter de ditch an' git ter be a low-down Christian."

"Did you ever hear from the soldier again?" asked Bessie.

"Lor, yes, honey; he jes' writ de mos' beautifulest letter ter ole missus arter de war done end, an' he say dat she done by him same 's de Lawd meant when he tell he people ter lub dey enemies, an' den he say dat he know she lost a heap by de war, trou de slabes an' sich. He say dat he ain't got much, nohow; but ef she 'll gree, he gwine share wot he do hab wid her."

"Did she let him?" asked Bessie.

"Naw, honey; she say she do dat fur de lub ob de Lawd, an' she doan want no pay 'cept ter hab him satisfied. She know he gwine take keer on 'er."

"I never realized how true that was until since I have been sick," said Bessie, "and he has taken care of me, and given me so much help in every way, and so many kind friends. And now, to think I am really able to walk a little! It seems almost too much. It would be hard for papa to come home and find me still in my chair."

Mr. Carter had been written to by this time, and told of Bessie's condition, as he was much improved, and it was thought best for both him and Bessie that he should thoroughly understand everything before they met. Bessie was by no means strong yet, though it was thought she would soon become so after she was able to get about more. Her country life had done wonders for her; but there were still times when she suffered, and would grow weak again. One of these times came just before the travelers were expected, and threatened to put a damper on the spirits of those who were at Morelands; but Bessie, in her sweet way, begged them not to mind, as she knew it was all right. God had some good reason for it.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN AFFECTING MEETING.

THE time had approached rapidly for the travelers to return, and everything had been done to bring Bessie into as strong a condition as possible; but her eyes would show, in spite of all she could do, that she was not so strong as she had been. Quietly she lay back in her chair trying to rest, and to be strong enough to stand the excitement of the following day, when she expected to meet her father, mother and sister. Helen had gone into one of the adjoining rooms, where she was arranging some fresh flowers, when she was startled by the words:

“Where is my child? Where is Bessie?”

Turning quickly she saw her aunt approaching, her face very pale, and full of anxiety. Putting her finger to her lips, she went to her, and, in a low tone, cautioned her against speaking so that Bessie could hear her.

“She is not worse?” asked Mrs. Carter, quickly.

“Only a little drawback; but she has been trying to keep from exciting herself, so that she might be bright and well to-morrow, when we expected you. She is resting now.”

“Where? Can I not go to her? We arrived a day earlier than we expected, and I hurried off at once to see

Bessie, leaving your uncle and Adele to attend to the baggage, and to follow me to-morrow morning. I could not wait till then. Take me to her, please."

"Perhaps it would be as well for me to tell her first that you are here."

"Do not tell her who, only that it is some one who longs to see her, and let me go to her as soon as possible."

Helen left the door open as she went into the room where Bessie was, knowing her chair was in such a position that she could not see her mother. To her surprise, she found Bessie with a troubled look on her face.

"What is it, dear?" she asked, as she knelt by her side.

"I was thinking of poor mamma," she said. "It will be so hard for her to find me in this way."

"Not hard in the way you think, dear, I am very sure; but I want to tell you of a nice surprise I have for you; something that will make you very, very happy. If I could tell you that mamma——"

"Poor, poor mamma! I am so sorry for her. She cannot—— What was that, Cousin Helen?" she asked, as Mrs. Carter, who had come quietly into the room, and stood behind Bessie's chair, gave a heavy sob. The next moment, she was on her knees in front of her, saying, between her sobs:

"My child, my child! Oh, my baby!"

"Mamma! mamma!" cried Bessie, excitedly. "Dear, dear mamma."

"Did you think I could not bear to see you so? Did

you think I did not love you? I am to blame, I know, but tell me, I have not lost my child's love. Oh God, spare me that."

"Mamma," said Bessie, "do not cry so. Look up and let me tell you how much I love you, while I wipe the naughty tears away." As tenderly as though she were the older and her mother the younger, she wiped the tears from the eyes that were looking up into hers, and as she did so, she said :

"I love you so very much, mamma, that when I first was hurt, and thought you would mind having me about, I would rather have died than be a burden to you; but now—now that you do not mind—oh, mamma, it is worth all the pain and suffering to know it. You must let me thank God, mamma. I can't wait any longer."

Closing her eyes and bowing her head, she remained a moment very quiet, while her mother watched her eagerly. When she looked up, she smiled, and her eyes were very bright, but seeing her mother's face, she said, quickly :

"I will have to kiss the tears away. There, mamma, let me take off your bonnet." And with her delicate little hands she unfastened the strings, and laid the bonnet on a table by her side.

"What lovely hair you have!" she said, running her fingers through it. "I never knew how pretty it was before."

"Perhaps I did not give you a chance to find out. Bessie, my child, I have not done what I should for you;

but I have been punished in a way you could hardly understand. Mamma has never done much to make you think she cared for you ; but since she found out, just before leaving England, how near she came to losing you, she has hardly been able to sleep or eat. Will you try to love me now, dear ? ”

“ I always have loved you, mamma, but—— but—— I guess it was like Tom and me. We did not know how much we cared until we told each other. Here comes Cousin Helen again. Do you know what she did ? ”

“ Yes, yes ; but I cannot think of that yet. Cousin Helen understands, I am sure. She has done so much for us all, that—— ”

The tears came again, and she could not speak.

“ You are not tiring yourself, dear ? ” said Helen, who had left Bessie and her mother alone, but was afraid of too much excitement.

“ Oh, Cousin Helen, it rests me so to have mamma here. I can’t tell you how much, but I believe I could do almost anything now.” And Helen wondered if the dread of this meeting had not done much to keep her from improving as they had hoped. She certainly looked better than she had done since her late attack ; but Helen thought it best that her feelings should not be too much excited just then, and began to question her aunt about her uncle and Adele, and about their trip, suggesting in a few moments that Mrs. Duncan might be glad to welcome her.

“ You won’t leave me, mamma ? ” said Bessie. “ Let

Mrs. Duncan come here, and then you can sit where I can watch you."

Mrs. Duncan was brought in, and in a little while Maud appeared. She had by no means thrown aside her shy awkwardness before strangers, but to Bessie's delight her mother greeted her so pleasantly that a little of it disappeared at once.

"Maud is just the best company in the world, mamma," said Bessie, as Mrs. Carter, having kissed her and said a few kind words, still held her hand. "I don't know of any one who sees more funny things than she does. Some time when you want a good laugh, I will get her to tell some of her odd things. She knows just when to tell the funny things, and when the serious ones."

"Then I am more than ever glad to know her. Maud, you must try to like me as much as I am sure I shall like you."

Maud did not say anything; but when she could release herself she skipped to Helen's side, and there was a pleased look in her eyes as she seated herself on an ottoman. Tom was expected to arrive before long; but a note soon came from him saying that he had found out that his father had arrived, and had at once hunted him up and should stay with him till everything in the custom house had been attended to. His father, he said, was looking better than he had seen him for years, and he was very proud of him. Bessie was not to do anything to tire herself so that she could not walk to meet him for he, Tom, would be there to help her, if necessary.

It was a very happy evening they spent at Morelands, Bessie lying quietly most of the time and listening, while the others talked; and there was so much to tell, for each party was anxious to hear all that was possible about the doings of the others.

“Cousin Helen,” said Bessie, when she was bidding her good night, “I always loved mamma, you know that, but I never knew how very sweet and lovely she was. If it was the accident, I thank God for it.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

A VERY HAPPY REUNION.

MRS. CARTER kept Helen with her until late that night. She had many questions to ask about her child and the life they had all led during the last few months, and she also told her something of her own life.

“As a girl,” she said, “I was poor, but proud. My father failed when I was quite young, and there was a struggle to live decently that decided me on one point. I would make a brilliant match. It would kill me to be always poor. Realizing the fact that education was a great power in the world, I determined to devote myself to study for several years. It became a passion with me, and I not only studied books but people, until my ambition knew no bounds; for gradually came the consciousness of growing personal power, until I began to feel as though the whole world would be mine by a little exertion. By the time I was ready to enter society I had so laid my plans, and so studied human nature, that in spite of my poverty I was able to enter the best—perhaps I should say the most fashionable—society in the place where I lived. Then began my intrigues, I can call them nothing else, for I had determined to capture a prize, in the form of a husband, before my first season

was over. The prize I aimed for was one for which others were fighting too; but my belief in my own powers was such that I never supposed for an instant that I would lose the race. But I did; and then came my first rude awakening to the fact that all the world was not mine, after all. There were other men whom I could have if I would but say the word, but my pride had received a fall, and I would not notice them. Your uncle had watched the affair with apparent indifference, and I was piqued to think he was not among my ardent admirers; for he was a man I respected, whom I would have made an effort to win had I not been so absorbed in my other affair. As it turned out, I married your uncle in the end, loving him too, but loving his money and position more. For years now I have lived the life for which I longed, being, I thought, as happy as most people. My duties as a society woman claimed so much of my time that I had very little to devote to my husband and children, and I did not stop to consider the matter of their happiness, supposing their lives equally happy with mine. Adele, I determined, should make what I called a more brilliant match than my own. As for Bessie, I had scarcely thought much about her at all, until you came, and in a strange, unaccountable way opened my eyes to the fact that I was allowing to slip away from me something that you considered valuable, and that I myself might be sorry some day to have lost. I confess it made me a little uncomfortable at first, and then I dismissed it, and would not think of it again, for it was not

pleasant, and I had no time to devote to anything but society. One day—I doubt if you remember it—she went on some trifling errand to my room, an unusual thing to begin with, and when she returned, she handed me an exquisite rose. It may seem a simple thing for a child to do for her mother, but in this case it spoke volumes to me. It was a silent appeal that the child herself could not understand. I had always thought before that I loved my children as much as was necessary. Rising suddenly to go to the parlor I dropped the rose, and when I thought of it again that night and went to look for it, it was gone. I think I would have kept it always, had I found it."

"Bessie can tell you where it is," said Helen.

"Bessie! Did she find it? Then she must have thought I did not care, that the feeling that suggested it was wasted. Poor, poor child! and to think"—here she stopped, for her voice faltered—"that I might have lost her if you had not risked your life to save her. I cannot talk of it," she said with a shudder, adding, as though to change the subject, "it was while your uncle was so very ill abroad that I fully realized my position and what the world would be to me were I to lose him, and not have my children's love. He drew me to him so gently and lovingly that he won me entirely and completely. I do not understand it myself, but I know that now I would gladly endure poverty if, by keeping my riches, I were to lose my husband's and children's love. I suppose I have always loved them in a certain way, but

not as I do now. Why I tell you all this I hardly know, except that I realize how indirectly the change in me is due to you. We have all been benefited by having you with us, more than you can think, and yet, I—I would have moulded you to suit myself, and I would have spoiled you. Now, I understand your objections to certain things, for had you always blindly followed my wishes, you would have failed to accomplish what you have done. I wish Adele were more like you. I have known others with just such quiet, unconscious influence ; one, a girl when I was one, could have helped me to see things more as I see them now ; but I rebelled, and in a fit of terror, when I saw what would happen if I still remained under her influence, I broke away from it and would have nothing to do with her. I have never wholly forgotten it, however, and it made me more lenient toward you, I think ; for somehow I cannot help admiring certain qualities possessed by you both. It may seem strange for me to tell you these things, but I shall feel better for having spoken of them, and for some reason it seems more natural to speak of them to you, who have had so much to do with the change that has come to us, than to any one else. I have suffered agonies since I knew the serious nature of my child's accident, in the thought that I was too late to win her love. Helen, thank God that you can never pass through what I have in the last two weeks. And now—— ” Here she broke down completely, and Helen found herself likely to have another patient on her hands. She did not leave her

until far into the night, when she had fallen asleep from exhaustion. It had been a trying evening, and she knew the following day would be an exciting one; so she hastened to take rest herself, to be better able to go through with what might be before her.

The next day was one of those lovely fall days that make one glad to be alive. It reminded Helen of the one, a year before, when she had gone to the old mill to meet John. She scarcely had time to think of it, however, or to realize how much had happened since, for the day was full of its own happenings. First came Tom, full of life and excitement.

"I got up before daylight," he said, "so that I could get here before father, because I thought Bessie might like to try and walk to meet him, you know."

"Oh, Tom!" said Bessie, warmly, "I do believe you are the very best brother in all the world."

A glad, happy look came into Tom's face, and he shot a quick glance at Helen, who responded with a smile that told him she understood; and then he spoke at once of his father.

"You will hardly know him, Bess. He looks as young and happy as can be."

"And don't you think mamma is prettier than she ever was before?" asked Bessie, stroking lovingly the hair she had called so pretty the night before. "I do."

Tom had not shown any great pleasure on seeing his mother, but she had not expected it, for she had never yet tried to make her presence at any time a pleasure

to him; but there was a wistful look in her face that Helen saw, and from which she formed hopes for them both.

When the time came for Mr. Carter and Adele to arrive, there was great excitement at Morelands, for every one knew how eagerly Bessie had looked forward to meeting her father unaided and alone.

"I think I can do it, Tom," she said, brightly. "I feel so much stronger than I did yesterday."

She had been dressed in her "very prettiest," Mammy Tot declared, and she was the one who announced the arrival of the carriage. Tom was by Bessie's side; but before she would let him help her to rise, she took her mother's face between her little hands and kissed it, as though she were the older and her mother the younger of the two.

"All right now, Tom," she said, a moment later, and tenderly he put his arms about her and raised her to a standing position, holding her till she steadied herself, and only freeing her gradually, as she gained confidence.

As her father appeared in the doorway, she stepped bravely forward, a glad light in her eyes, and her hands stretched out to welcome him. There were not many steps to take; but as Mr. Carter caught her in his arms, her face grew very white, and her head dropped to her father's shoulder in a helpless way.

"It is so good," she said faintly and then stopped, for she had fainted. Mr. Carter picked her up in his arms, as Tom rolled her chair toward him, and Helen went to

a table for restoratives she had prepared for such an emergency. It proved to be only a momentary faintness, caused by excitement and exertion.

"I couldn't help it, just for a moment," Bessie said, as her father looked anxiously into her face. "I was so glad. It's all right now, papa dear, and I can get well and strong fast with you and mamma to help me. Oh, it is so good; but every one has been good and kind since you went away. Are you glad to be back, papa?"

"Yes, very, very glad to have all of my dear ones together once more."

"There is one of them you have not spoken to yet, papa, and you know if it had not been for her, you would not have had us all. Say something nice to her while I speak to Adele and then come back, for I can't spare you long," she said with a smile and a warm, hearty kiss.

Mr. Carter found Helen in the adjoining room, but when he tried to speak to her, he could only say a few words before he broke down, and it was Helen who did the talking for a few moments.

"I would rather you would not thank me for anything, uncle," she said, when he endeavored to speak of the accident. "I was only an instrument in God's hands."

"But you risked your own life to save hers," said her uncle, huskily.

"The Master gave me the work to do. My life was in his hands to do with as he thought best. He has been

very good in sparing us all to meet again. Dear Bessie has been a patient little sufferer, and we must not now let her look back into the sadness of it, uncle."

With gentle tact she changed the subject, taking him back, in a very few moments, to Bessie. Adele was strangely moved by the sight of her sister, and seemed glad to get away from her. Later in the day when she and Helen were alone, she said:

"I can't stay near Bessie much yet. I suppose it's because I know I ought not to have left her in the first place ; and, after all, I did not have so good a time as I hoped. Father was sick so much we could not go about and see things, and it was disappointing in every way. You stayed when you did not want to and did—— I wonder sometimes that I don't almost hate you, Helen ; but I can't, even though you have taken my place in so many ways, and have even supplanted me in the thoughts of the man whom above all I admired."

"I don't understand you," said Helen, with a perplexed look on her face.

"Which part?" asked Adele, eying her curiously. "Do you mean to say that you don't understand about Mr. Edmands? that you don't see what every one else does and what I knew before I came back, that he is wholly and absolutely devoted to you and you alone? I think I could hate you, if I thought you had deliberately set out to bring this thing about ; but I know that is not like you and——"

"Please, please stop, Adele," said Helen, whose face

had grown very white. "You have no right to talk so."

"I think I have, Helen, and you will understand—"

"No, no, I cannot listen. It hurts." And rising, with a frightened look and an uncertain step, she hurried from the room.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PARTINGS.

THAT was a very happy day for Bessie, who was able to show the bright, cheerful side of her nature, the excitement of the meeting in the morning having been followed by nothing more serious than the momentary faintness. Three mysterious looking trunks were brought into her room in the afternoon, and she was told that one was for her, one for Helen, and one for Tom. Such a happy time as it was when they were unpacked, for everything in them seemed just suited to the one for whom it was intended.

“Indeed, uncle, you ought not to have done this for me,” said Helen, when she had partially unpacked her trunk.

“Well, it is done, you see,” he said, pleasantly, “and I doubt if Bessie thinks I did wrong.”

“Indeed I don’t, papa. I would rather you had brought Cousin Helen’s than Tom’s and mine. I’m sure I don’t know how you knew so well just what she would like. Dear Cousin Helen! She has been so very, very much to me and to Tom too; and yet, papa, I can be glad with her that she is going away now, because she will be with Maud and Cousin John. She has been so good to me that I can truly say I am pleased to have her go.”

And Helen seemed anxious to leave; at least John thought so, when she came to him and asked if they could not go at once to their new home.

"Uncle will move into town next week," she said. "I am not needed here now, and do so long to be with you alone once more."

There was something in the tone that struck John as new and strange from her, perhaps the more so, as he had noticed something he could not quite understand in her manner in the last two days, a half-frightened clinging to him and a startled look if any one spoke to her suddenly. She had now come very close to him, and with her head on his shoulder was awaiting his answer. He stroked her face lovingly as he said:

"We can go any day you wish, dear. How would you like first to go back to the old North State?"

"Could we, John?" she asked, eagerly.

"Yes, I have arranged for it so that if you wished, we then might go there for a week before settling down for the winter. There are things to be attended to that it would be better for me to attend to in person; and I left old Aunt Chloe in Aunt Han's house to have it ready for us at any moment, should we decide to go there."

"Oh, John, I can't think of anything in all the world I would rather do than spend a week there with you," and then a convulsive little sob warned him it was best to change the subject at once; and he spoke of what had come to them both as a glad and happy surprise. Mr. Edmands had told them, the night before, that his friend,

the publisher, had been so pleased with Helen's work that he was willing to give her all she could do, and pay her well for it.

"Not that I want you now to do anything for your own support," said John, when they were talking of it; "but it makes me very happy and relieves me of one anxiety to think you could do it, if necessary. I knew you had considerable talent, but I never dreamed you would be able to accomplish so much in so short a time, with even the very best advantages. I am proud of my sister in more ways than one."

"Are you really, John? It makes me very glad to hear you say so. We can go home, then, right away?" she asked, wistfully.

"Yes, indeed, just as soon as you can get ready; but Mr. Edmands would like to take us on several long drives before we leave. Do you think you would like to wait for that?"

He knew by the way she started and tightened her hold of his hand what it was he had seen in her that was new and strange. There were thoughts and feelings just dawning upon her that she could not understand. They bewildered her, and he was not surprised when she said:

"I would rather go at once, please, John."

And John felt that she was right. It was best that she should go away and look into her heart, and find out the meaning of all this.

"We can go the day after to-morrow, if that suits you, dear."

"Yes, John. Thank you," she said, very quietly. "It will be good to be back there again with you."

"Things will never be quite the same as they have been there. You understand that, dear? Even we, ourselves, you will find, have changed in some ways."

"You will always care for me as you have done, John?" she asked, eagerly. "You have not changed in that?"

"No, dear; and nothing could ever make me love my sister less than I have always. In fact, I think I love her more and more as time goes on; and she proves herself worthy of all the love and respect I can possibly give her."

"Dear John. Thank you again for saying that. I must go now and tell them about our leaving."

Although all in her uncle's family were sorry to have Helen leave, there was not one who felt that it would be right to ask her to stay longer, when she had already sacrificed so much on their account.

"You have been a little sunbeam, finding your way into the chill and dampness of our home," said her uncle, "brightening and warming it in such a cheerful, generous way we are all better in many ways for having had you here; and you leave behind you a something that will always remain, and will be a constant happy reminder of your life among us."

Mrs. Carter could not say much, but her manner was very affectionate and thoughtful, and there were often tears in her eyes when she did try to talk to her. Adele

was very sober at times when they were together, and once said that she supposed she ought to wish to be as good as she, and to wield an influence such as she did, but she could not yet; perhaps she would some day. Tom was very attentive during the next two days, watching for every opportunity of doing some little thing for Helen.

"It is not in me," he said, on one occasion, when he had accompanied her on a walk to a sick neighbor's, "to be like John, you know; but, Helen, I've been thinking about myself a good deal lately, and I've come to the conclusion that if I just try to do the best with what is in me, it's all I can do."

"And all that is expected of any of us, Tom," said Helen. "If you stick to that and live up to the best that is in you, you will do as much in your way as John does in his. You know I have great faith in you, Tom."

"Yes. It was that which first gave me any desire or any thought of better things. Then Bessie helped. I tell you what it is, Helen, if I ever do study medicine, I have fully made up my mind to make a specialty of troubles like hers, for her sake."

Bessie talked more about Helen's leaving than any of them, but she talked of it pleasantly and as though it were something that was to make her happy, as well as Helen. Only once did she allow the conversation to assume a sadder tone, and then she said seriously:

"Every once in a while I have to stop myself from thinking what I will do in the future, when you are not

here to help me and to talk to me when things get dark; for they will get dark sometimes, I know."

"When they do, dear, remember this:

"In every 'O my Father!'
Slumbers deep a 'Here, my child.'"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“ONLY ME.”

ONCE more the brother and sister found themselves together in the old mill. They had been at home nearly a week, and had visited many of the old scenes, some recalling pleasant and some sad recollections; but this place they had left until to-day. Maud was with friends, and they two were alone. Around them nothing seemed changed.

The old mill looked as it did a year ago; the stream flowed on as it had flowed then, and the very trees seemed to wear the identical dress. And yet there was a change, and Helen knew it, and realized that it was in herself.

“I never dreamed,” she said, “that a year could bring so many things into one’s life. I suppose that is because I have always lived here so quietly. Do you remember, John, my saying here, before I went away, that there would be no excuse for my not being good when there was plenty of money and nothing to do but have a good time? I was afraid of it all, but you told me there was work everywhere to be done for the Master, and that he often gave it very unexpectedly. I can understand that better now, as I do many other things, and I am glad I could come back here and think them all out. I was

sorry to leave so many kind friends, but I am so happy to be here again. How little we thought, last year, John, of all that was to happen in our own home circle! To think of dear Mr. Duncan, who came to take me away, having so much to do with the opportunities you have now."

"I have my little sister to thank for that."

"How, John? I had nothing to do with it."

"More than you think, Helen."

It had been a real grief to Helen to part from Mrs. Duncan, whom she had learned to look upon as more than an ordinary friend; but they would not be so far apart but what they could see each other occasionally. There were others, too, to whom she was sorry to say good-bye, and some she did not see, as they did not stop in New York, since they were to be there a few days on their return, and would then have time to see them all. There would be much to talk over and arrange then too, for she and Bessie had determined that the "hospital work" should be continued, and Helen was to visit the hospital and arrange with Mr. Keener as to the best way in which to do it. Bessie, she knew, looked forward eagerly to seeing her again, and it would be an equal pleasure to her, though it was a great comfort to think the child was so happy now in her home relations. She had been told about the rose, and reminded Helen of what she had said of the work it might have accomplished in a few short moments.

"I did not dream it could do so much, did you, Cousin

Helen? and that I should know of it, too," she said. "It is so beautiful to think of. I shall always keep it as long as I live."

Mr. Edmands was at the train in New York when they arrived, with a basket of flowers for Helen and one of fruit for Maud; but they had only time for a very few words before they were obliged to separate.

After discussing plans together for some time, and talking of the old home that John was anxious to live in again, some day, Helen said:

"It seems to me, John, if we live out the lives given us, in the very best way we can, there is no need of there being so very many lost days, after all. Your text frightened me at first; but now I can see how it would be possible to have very few days entirely lost. Mammy Tot used to say that there was never a time when the Lord did not have something right before us to do, if we would only see it. Dear old soul, how glad she will be to get home to-night and be with her family once more! It was very kind in Mr. Edmands to bring her back."

It had been thought best to keep Mammy Tot to wait on Bessie until they moved her and she was comfortably settled at home once more. When she could leave, Mr. Edmands had volunteered to take her back himself.

"Nell dear," said John, drawing her close to him, "I think you understand now, as well as I do, that it is not entirely on Mammy Tot's account that he is coming."

"Yes, John, but it is all so new and strange," she said

very quietly, "that I can hardly understand it, and when I think of you, I feel that I ought not to let him come."

"Do you remember a conversation similar to this that we had some time ago, when the positions were reversed? You thought that something of this kind coming into my life would make me very happy, and you would be glad for me. If God has brought this good thing into your life first, do you not think I can be glad too?"

She made no answer.

"It is not every man with whom I would trust my little sister; but his is a noble nature, and a warm, unselfish heart. He would consider it a sacred trust. Did you know that it was his father who blighted Aunt Han's life? That was one reason she went to New York. You had mentioned the name, and it startled her and made her suspicious at once. She went there fully prepared to bring you home should she hear one word against him. She not only enquired about him, but saw him, thanks to Mrs. Duncan, whom she took into her confidence; and the fact that she did not allow herself to be prejudiced longer when she could hear nothing against him shows the true nobility of her soul. She was willing to forget the past and all its bitterness."

"Dear Aunt Han! How sad it is to think of her life having been saddened so."

"She was all the more anxious that yours should not be, and though the name would have been a constant reminder, she would, in her heart, have rejoiced if this had

brought you happiness. If you make up your mind to it, Helen dear——”

“John, do you think I ought to, when he is so noble and grand and I am—only me? That’s not grammatical, John, but it expresses my feelings. It seems to me he ought to choose a woman more accustomed to the life he has lived, and not a simple country girl.”

“But he has found something in ‘only me’ that makes him care more for her than for all the grand ladies he has ever met or ever will meet.”

“Do you really think so, John?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Do you know, John, he made me uncomfortable always at first. I was not accustomed to men just like him, and it seemed to me he must think me a very simple, awkward girl, and that he would be glad to get away from me. I don’t know just why I felt more so with him than with others, for there were many other men who dressed as elegantly as he did, and who had the same manners. After I knew him better, I got over it, and I am sure now, John, he is brave and true. If I did not think so, I could not let him come here to-night. I have lived so long with you, that I have learned to look for qualities that all men do not possess. If I thought he was different—that—— It is such a strange, untried life, John, that it frightens me to think of it.”

“It need not, Helen. Remember:

“‘Before me, even as behind,
God is, and all is well.’”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE FLOOD.

SCARCELY had Mr. Edmands and Mammy Tot arrived before the cry went up from many voices: "The river!" "The river!"

Once, many years before, after severe storms in the mountains, the little stream that flowed through the town had become so swollen that it had overflowed its banks, causing great loss of life as well as property. Now it had been raining for three days in the mountains, and the storm had been so unusually severe that the moment the cry was heard, every one knew what it meant. John explained briefly to Mr. Edmands, and then, telling Mammy Tot it would not be safe for her to attempt to go home, said a few bright, encouraging words to Helen, and started off to see what could be done to prevent the terrible scenes likely to occur.

Mr. Edmands had not understood so quickly as Helen, and when John had gone, he questioned her.

"If your brother can help," he said, "surely I might too. If you will tell me which way to go, I will follow him."

"Mammy Tot and I will go with you," she said. "I do not think I could stay at home while so many others may be in trouble."



"I's a tinkin' dat de bestest ting fur dis ole 'ooman am ter git ter de cabin," said Mammy Tot, anxiously. "It nigh de water, yer know, Miss Hel'n, an' ef so be dat it gwine creep up 'long side de ole man an' de chillens, dey din't got no'ers ter go."

"I don't believe you could cross the bridge, Mammy Tot. At any rate, we must make some inquiry first."

"The river," ordinarily a modest little stream, was now a perfect torrent, carrying past the town houses, barns, trees, and cattle, and as Mr. Edmands approached the place where John was, he asked, anxiously:

"Is there nothing to do? Surely something can——"

"We are waiting until there are some signs of human life. It is likely there will be, and then——"

At that moment a cry went up from Mammy Tot:

"De cabin! Lawd hab massy, de ole man an' de chillens dey all done drownded."

"Let us hope they were safe before the cabin was washed away," said Helen, putting her arms round the old woman and trying to quiet her.

"Dar goes de critter!" she cried. "I knows im." And in her excitement she would have rushed into the water, had not Helen held her back.

"There's a tree coming with people in the branches," cried a boy, excitedly, who had been stationed farther up the stream as a sentinel.

"Now is the time for work," said John, quietly; "give me a rope."

"I shall go out too," said Mr. Edmands. "The cur-

rent is strong and it may take both of us to manage the tree."

They were each given a rope and swam out side by side as far as the water was quiet enough to allow it; but when they reached the current they separated, one going up on the edge of it, the other down, neither knowing if they would meet again, for once in the current itself, there seemed so little hope. On came the tree so strangely freighted, and again Mammy Tot cried :

"De ole man an' de chillens! De good Lawd be praised!"

It was Helen now who needed support, for as the tree came in sight it seemed as though it would dash to pieces anything with which it came in contact. Breathlessly people stood on the shore and watched. Could anything be done, or would those who had gone to the rescue be carried hopelessly along? It seemed a miracle that any one could live in its branches. They had evidently climbed into it for safety before it had been torn from its roots. How had they been able to cling to it as it fell, and was swept away? And why had it not rolled over as other trees had done? Would it not turn now, if they attempted to change its course? These thoughts flew through the minds of those who watched, but there were few words spoken; for each moment it seemed as though some terrible thing were about to happen.

John had stationed himself up the stream, and when he ventured into its seething current, it seemed as though he himself were fighting for life. It was growing

dark, but those on the bank could still see everything that was going on. He managed somehow to fasten his rope to the tree, and those on shore began hauling on the rope very cautiously. Another instant and the tree had freed itself and was whirling again down the stream, carrying John with it. Helen covered her face with her hands, and a kind neighbor drew her to a seat by her on a large flat stone.

"This is no place for you," she said. "Let me take you home."

"Not yet. God will give me strength to bear the worst, if it is to come."

A wild shout rang out on the air as Mammy Tot leaned over and said:

"Dey's a comin', Miss Hel'n. Mars Edmands, he fetchin' on em in."

Springing up, Helen watched them eagerly down the stream as they were being drawn, so slowly, into calmer water. Would the rope which Mr. Edmands had been enabled to make fast to it hold? Were they all there? The suspense was terrible, and it seemed to Helen that she lived years in a few moments. Hand in hand, at the water's edge, she and Mammy Tot stood ready to welcome their loved ones, should the good God see fit to give them back. Others had made way for them and anxiously and eagerly waited, for at intervals a cry of terror escaped from some member of the crowd, who thought all was over. But God was merciful, and brought them all back alive.

“ You are not hurt ? ” asked Helen of John, with tears in her eyes, after her first greeting.

“ A little bruised, dear, that is all.”

“ You will come home now ? ”

“ In a few moments. It is too dark to do anything more to-night, except to station watchers along the banks to give warning in case of danger to property here. If you can have some dry clothing ready for us, we will both be thankful.”

Taking Mammy Tot and her family back with her, she hurried to the house with her heart very full, and when she had entered it, went to her room and gave thanks most heartily to Him who had saved her from a terrible grief. Maud and Chloe had kept supper in readiness, and she soon had dry clothing laid out, and was ready with a cheerful smile to welcome the rescuers. She started when John came in, for he came alone, and she asked, quickly :

“ Where is Mr. Edmands ? ”

“ Did he not come with you ? ”

“ No, John,” she said, her face turning very pale. “ I thought he had stayed with you. What is it ? ” she asked quickly, as a sudden change in the expression of his face startled her. “ You think he is in danger again ? ”

“ I hope not.”

“ Do not be afraid to tell me. What made you think so, John ? ”

“ Just as you were leaving, he told me he thought he heard the cry of a woman in the water, but no one else

seemed to have heard it, and I thought, as I did not see him again, that he had come back with you. It may not have been that."

"I thought he was brave and strong before. I know it now," she said, with her arms about John's neck. "I shall pray that after saving so many lives to-day, his own may be spared. If it had not been for him——"

"There, dear, I understand. Yes, he saved my life, as well as others, and I shall do everything in my power to bring him back with me, alive and well."

Leaving Helen to another period of suspense, John and some of the neighbors with lanterns and ropes returned to the water.

"If he went back into it," said one, "he is far out of reach by this time."

John's plan was to follow the course of the river, shouting as they went, in hopes he might be watching somewhere and would hear them, or perhaps had lost his way in the darkness. On and on they went, calling and then stopping to listen; on into the outskirts of the town, into the country, and out toward the old mill. Nowhere did they hear a response to their call that was the response they sought.

"It's not worth while to go farther than the mill," said one. "Nothing could live beyond that."

"I doubt if we will find the mill itself standing," said John. "It could hardly bear such a strain as this."

As they neared the place, they stopped and shouted once again.

"Hark!" said John, "I heard a voice."

Again they called, then went a little farther and called again. This time there was no mistake about the response, which was ahead and not very far off.

"Come on, boys," said John; "the old mill still stands, and the voice is there."

Hurrying forward, they had just time to see the form of a man bending over a woman inside the mill, when a strange, grating, rumbling sound was heard. As it came, John sprang into the mill, caught the woman in his arms and cried to the man:

"Fly for your life."

The next minute the old mill was a heap of ruins.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A HAPPY ISSUE.

HELEN had borne the suspense bravely. She had spent a portion of the time in her own room, alone with God. The rest, she had spent helping Mammy Tot and Chloe look after the rescued ones—"My ole man an' de chillens."

"Dey's a comin'," said Sambo, excitedly, rushing into the house after he had finished his supper and had been out to see what was going on, "an' yer's ter hab de bade ready fur de sick 'ooman, Mars John say."

"Who is with Mars John, Sambo?" asked Mammy Tot, eagerly.

"Nigh 'bout a hundred, I reckn, an' dey's atotin' some people an'—"

Sambo never finished his sentence, for Helen would have fallen, had not Mammy Tot caught her.

"You Mandy, you," called the old woman, "go fix dat bade, whiles I tends ter Missy Hel'n."

"No," said Helen, faintly. "I will do it. I must have something to do."

She roused herself and went about nervously, Maud following her wistfully and doing what she was allowed. At last Helen sat down, and after covering her face with her hands for a moment, looked up with a much more

quiet expression on her face, as she drew Maud to her and said :

“God has been very good to us, Maud, in giving us back our dear brother. Do not forget to thank him, dear.”

“I have done it, sister, over and over again, and I have asked him to bring Mr. Edmands back. It would be dreadful to have anything happen to him, you know.”

“Not if God thought best, Maud. We must not forget that he——”

“De good Lawd be praised fur wot he done fur all we dis day,” said Mammy Tot, entering the room and approaching Helen excitedly. “Dey’s all safe, Mars John and Mars Edmands, an’ dey’s a totin’ a ‘ooman wot’s hurted, but she ain’t dade.”

It was a strange story Mr. Edmands told that night of having heard a woman’s cry so distinctly that he was not content when others said they had not. It was repeated, but more faintly; and yet he could tell from the direction, that it was still coming down the stream, and had not passed him. Once more he fought with the water, watching for anything coming toward him. It came at last—another faint cry—and then he had his hand on something that proved to be a boat. He climbed into it, but found to his horror that there was no oar nor paddle. Was there no help? he thought. He tried to think what to do.

“Pray God to guide us,” he said to the woman, who had given up all hope. “With him all things are pos-

sible." Even as he spoke some heavy object dashed past them, causing the boat to swerve toward the shore.

"We are coming to the mill," she cried. "If we touch it we will be dashed to pieces."

"Be ready to jump when I give the word," he cried, "and give yourself up to me."

Never having been along the stream by daylight, he could only guess at his surroundings; but when he saw what he supposed to be the mill of which she spoke, he gave the word to jump, keeping hold of the woman and jumping himself, as she did. There was another fierce struggle before they reached the shore, and then the woman was unconscious. Her companion carried her into the mill, where he tried to restore her to consciousness, for he could not tell which way to go for aid, nor did he care to leave her. The account of John's arrival and the falling of the old mill caused Helen to shudder, and then to offer up a silent prayer of thanksgiving, for were they not all together now? The woman had been kindly cared for, and would be all right in the morning, the doctor said.

"I owe my life to you," said Mr. Edmands to John, when they were parting for the night.

"No more than I owe mine to you, my friend and brother."

"Thank God for that last word. I have hardly dared hope he could have so great a blessing in store for me."

"Miss Hel'n," said Mammy Tot, when her family had been disposed of for the night, "dey's one ting dat

gwine be heaps o' comfort ter me. Dat ole man o' mine ain't none o' yer up an' down Christians no mo'. He done trow de load offen he ownself, an' I's a tinkin' dat he gwine holp dem wot's low down ter git up, same's he ownself. I knowed yer'd be pleased ter know 'bout dat, same's ef old missus was yere."

"Indeed I am more glad than you can think; for in helping others one always helps one's self."

"That is what the brave, helpful little sister does," said John, putting his arms lovingly about her; "and no man or woman of the humblest sort can really be strong, gentle, pure and good without the world's being better for it."

THE END.

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